

Across America with the King of the Belgians

BY
PIERRE GOEMAERE

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM THE FRENCH
BY
BEATRICE SORCHAN



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**ACROSS AMERICA WITH THE
KING OF THE BELGIANS**

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CHAPTER I

ON BOARD THE "GEORGE WASHINGTON"

THESE first lines are my preface. It is probably not placed where authors usually place their prefaces, but I must confess that I mingled it in with the text so that the reader could recognize it and avoid it only with the greatest difficulty. The war introduced camouflage into the matters of every day life. People very rarely read a preface; they don't like to be warned ahead of time. Musset advised against reading "foolish prefaces." Critics are the only ones who read them, and then chiefly because it often enables them to dispense with reading the rest of the book. As far as I am concerned, however, I have camouflaged my preface only so that the reader may know that this is not an official

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account of the King's journey to the United States, but the independent and personal observations of a privileged individual, who, having the honor of accompanying his sovereign over there, jotted down in these pages his impressions and souvenirs of the trip.

I must confess that two months ago I had not the slightest intention of writing this book. I thought I had satisfied my need for expression in newspaper articles and lectures. But as the days go by, souvenirs come back and more mature impressions are born again.

The splendor of that journey still haunts my memory, like that shepherd in the Provençal legend who, after having looked too long at the sun, kept some of its light in his eyes. My ears still have the echo of a great applause.

I shall endeavor therefore to bring back some image of all this by noting day by day from the very beginning the impressions and observations made on His Majesty's trip through the great American Republic.

I had just boarded the "George Washington." The huge ship sent over by the American government to convey the King to the United States

was swaying in the middle of the Channel near Calais, between France and England. She drew so much water that she could not come any nearer to either coast. The boat had been fitted up in a manner worthy of the great persons she was going to receive; she was all ready, with her decks waxed, her brass glittering and her pennants flying in the breeze.

Everybody was waiting for the King, the captain, the crew and my humble self. There was also on the deck a dignified, silent individual, faultlessly buttoned up in his jacket, an important personage, apparently. His whiskers and hard protruding chin marked him as a perfect type of Yankee, doubtless some emissary from the American government. As I speak English atrociously and had some doubts on that subject for the future, I decided that it was a good opportunity to make a beginning and become familiar with the language. I prepared my sentence with great care and approached this imposing official.

"Excuse me, sir. Perhaps you are waiting too for the King of Belgium."

The man looked at me. He did not seem to have understood. It was my pronunciation, of

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course. I repeated the question more distinctly.

"Hein?" he said.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," I continued in French. "I did not know you spoke both languages. You are also waiting for the King, are you not?"

"Yes, sir. I am waiting for His Majesty. I am his valet!"

The condescension and haughtiness of that remark! You are also waiting for the King, I had said. That "also" was so candid. . . . You see the difference between the emotions with which the man who gets out His Majesty's bedroom slippers was waiting and those of a useless mortal like myself.

Still, my meeting with this valet gave me the idea of undertaking a secret exploration through the apartments destined for Their Majesties. I went hurriedly down into the heart of the ship. How elegant and luxurious was the suite which had been decorated for royalty! It consisted first of a private salon and dining-room. In the salon were musical instruments, books and portraits by American artists. Opposite the King's bedroom was a study where, among other apparatus created by American ingenuity, I noticed

a wireless telephone which carried three hundred miles.

The Queen's apartment was more coquettish. There was a bedroom with mahogany wainscoting upholstered in old rose. All the furniture was of mahogany. There was also a pretty boudoir with furniture covered with red flowered tapestry. On the tables were electric lamps with shades decorated with painted flowers and branches. Among the masses of fresh flowers I noticed a special preponderance of red dahlias, particularly popular in America. The suite prepared for Prince Leopold was also charming and was finished in lemon-wood.

Suddenly, however, I was interrupted in my investigations by the terrible roar of a cannon which shook the huge hull of the ship. All around me people were shouting and cheering. Officers were dashing through the passages and sailors bumped against each other on the stairs. What was the matter? A few months ago it would have meant that an enemy submarine was in sight.

I went up on deck in haste. All the crew was lined up for dress parade; the gunners were at their places. The gun that had just gone off was

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smoking slightly. Over the bridge leaned the captain, studying the horizon through his field-glasses. I also looked in the same direction and saw three ships appearing from the direction of Ostende. They were the American destroyers bringing the King and Queen and Prince Leopold. Like real ocean greyhounds they bounded over the waves and sped towards us in a puff of smoke. They reached us and came up alongside of the vessel. As the King boarded the "George Washington" all of the guns were shot off simultaneously and their thunder went rolling towards the cliffs of Calais.

The King and Queen and Prince Leopold immediately went to their rooms and the tumult gave way to absolute silence. The crew closed the port-holes, muzzled the guns and lowered the flags. The three destroyers which had brought the royal guests surrounded the "George Washington." Suddenly the ship's siren blew a tremendous blast; the rigging vibrated and great clouds of black smoke poured forth from the stacks. With the grating of the windlass the anchors were dragged up from the sand to which they clung, and slowly, without a jar, like a train which pulls smoothly out of a station, the vessel

glided out on the huge ocean. We were off! Calais faded from view in the distant fog and soon disappeared entirely, while the coast of England became clearer and clearer with its cliffs gilded by the rays of the sun. Nevertheless, when the royal passengers came up on deck after a six o'clock dinner, land was no longer in sight. The ship had left the neck of the channel and was speedily plowing the first waters of the Atlantic. We were to stay on that immense ocean for nine days. Nine successive times would the sun sparkle and become extinguished on the gray uniformity of that moving landscape.

As soon as he was on board the "George Washington," the King had the Belgian reporters who were accompanying him on the trip presented to him. I shall give a description of that interview in order to reveal some of the traits of His Majesty's character. Leaning with his back against the railing with his hands in his pockets, the King talked good-naturedly for a long while, warning his interrogators to give no official interpretation to his statements. He led the conversation to different subjects without any preconceived idea, but outlined in particular the

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aim of his trip to the United States, which was to bind more solidly than ever the friendly relations between that country and Belgium.

Changing to another subject, he praised the advantages of sports in the physical development of youth. "In the American colleges and universities," he said, "sport is perfectly reconciled to study. We should imitate that. Look at the healthy development of our young men who came back from the trenches. These youths have also gained morally. Their characters are more serious, their souls deeper."

As somebody remarked here that some young men had come back from the war with a craving for adventure which interfered with their desire for routine work, His Majesty answered: "Our Congo needs just such young men. Let them go there and carry with them their energy and initiative."

King Albert has made a special study of the living conditions in our great African colony. He is perfectly familiar with the climate and its dangers, but knows, however, the way in which to protect one's self. One can judge by this repartie: "Malaria and other illnesses of that coun-

try are easily cured to-day if they are treated in time."

"But the fevers which are so deadly, Sire, how can one protect one's self against them?"

"By a daily dose of quinine and an upright conduct." That was His Majesty's answer.

As has often been said before, the King expresses himself with great deliberation, but his choice of words is extremely judicious. He knows the proper word; his sentences are so regularly constructed that they could be written as well as spoken. One is aware of a remarkable power of attention on the part of our Sovereign. Whether he is talking with two or with ten people, he follows each individual's opinions carefully and discerns their exact shades. He looks at the speaker with his blue eyes in a way which is singularly keen and penetrating without being aggressive. As his conversation shows great erudition, the conclusions which he draws reveal uncommon intellectual power.

The life of the royal guests on board the "George Washington" was simple and quiet. The captain of the ship had attached a gunner of the marines to the King's person as well as to that of

the Queen and Prince. These marines were ordered to follow the august passengers wherever they went, keeping five feet behind them. The very first hour the King asked to be freed from this pomp which was doubtless very ornamental but entirely superfluous to a sovereign who has not the traits of a Hohenzollern. The Queen expressed the same desire. As for the Prince, whom we wanted to nickname the little Prince of Melancholy, he hardly seemed to have noticed the man who silently dogged his footsteps.

The King wore the undress uniform of a general. No braid, no trimmings distinguished him from the officers of his suite. This simplicity of appearance delighted the American officers, who also admired his fine physique. For it must be said that one of the reasons, doubtless secondary but nevertheless powerful, for the popularity which immediately surrounded our King, was his nobility of bearing, physical comeliness, and hardy complexion. With the Americans who are rather naïve and even primitive in certain respects, the external appearance of a man has an extraordinary influence on the prestige which he commands. Indications of this were found everywhere—in the newspapers which

took pleasure in describing the King's appearance, and especially in their exclamations. How many times as the King passed by did I hear the words: "What a fine-looking man!"

When the King was not reading, he would walk about the deck, wandering here and there like a mere idler, stopping to talk to anybody he happened to meet, whether officer or plain sailor. He frequently walked up and down alone, being fond of solitude. A dreamer by nature, one often saw him leaning against the railing where he would remain for a time gazing off into space.

What was he thinking of in these moments? Perhaps of the great glory which was waiting for him over there, of the triumphal reception which the American people were preparing for him, rumors of which reached us every day by wireless. Perhaps he was simply delighted by the great expanse stretched out before his gaze, in the face of that horizon which, in spite of the course of the ship, still remained as far away as ever. This King, in spite of his extraordinary moral greatness, may perhaps have felt infinitesimally small on this moving abyss, this gigantic globe, unless, indeed, this globe on which we were revolving so rapidly that we caught up with

the course of the sun did not seem small to him. We had to set our watches back a whole half hour every morning. We had only been gone three days. At the time of which I am thinking it was five o'clock in the afternoon and the sun was beating down upon the ocean, while over there in Europe where it was after seven, night had encircled everything.

As we went forward, it grew warmer and warmer. We were thus catching up with summer. Having left the continent in the first chills of our autumn, we were to arrive in the United States during the hot season. The King was very probably thinking how small the globe was, unless . . . But I must stop. Is it not bold and irreverent to try to guess the private thoughts of a King who is dreaming while leaning against the railing of a ship?

The simplicity of dress which the American officers admired in our King was also apparent in the Queen. She always appeared dressed in white, wearing a woollen gown in the morning and a silk one in the evening. Her manner was always charming and unaffected. She smiled amiably at all whose glance met hers. It was Queen Elizabeth's smile that won the hearts of

the huge American crowds later. It became famous. All the newspapers talked of it. Some called it stereotyped, but they judged it probably by different photographs which appeared in magazines and newspapers. In a photograph, however, one's smile is always the same, it is congealed. Those, however, who come near the Queen know its genuineness and the thousand shades of meaning which she can express. I should endeavor to describe them if I were not certain that if it is irreverent to penetrate the intimate thoughts of a king, it is even less permissible to analyze the smile of a queen.

Queen Elizabeth showed a particular liking for the different games on board. Her skill at quoits was remarkable. It was a charming sight to see that little Queen, so light and slender in her white dress, clap her hands for joy over a successful shot. One day I turned to General Jacques, who was watching the scene with an amused air, and said to him:

"Well, General, are you not going to play?"

The hero of Dixmude answered me with one of those frank laughs which seem to come from his everlasting fount of gaiety:

“What, I throw quoits! You do not really mean it! It would ruin my prestige.”

Prince Leopold did not care much for the games. He watched them at a distance with the air of sadness which I have already noted. He is also a dreamer by nature like his father. Being rather tall for his eighteen years, he is at the awkward age at which a youth finds that it is difficult to know what to do with hands and feet. Timid by nature, he blushes easily. During audiences he observes his father's attitude attentively. He is visibly anxious to learn the business of being a king. He shows himself desirous of an intimate knowledge of all matters. He walked all over the ship, from bow to stern, paying attention to everything with which he was unfamiliar. Although he had visited more than one steamer, he greatly admired the “George Washington.”

I have spoken of a floating city in talking of this ship. I will let the reader judge for himself.

In addition to a store where all articles necessary to the toilet are sold, together with accessories such as cigars, cigarettes and candy, there are a tailor's shop on board, a laundry, a dental

parlor, and a drug-store, next to which is a hospital with a surgical room. Next to the post-office and the purser's office is the hairdresser's where three barbers are continually at work. Here, as everywhere, one is also struck with that regard for comfort which is one of the main traits of the American character. Lying rather than sitting in an armchair which resembles a bed more than a chair, one feels the razor stroke one's cheek with a gentleness entirely ignored by our European barbers. But it is after this operation that the *séance* begins to be agreeable. After applying a hot towel to your cheeks, the barber with his hands dripping with unctuous oil starts to massage your face, forehead, ears, nose, and neck, after which comes another massage with a second oiling, and then a third. Then he presses your neck, pinches your nostrils and boxes your cheeks,—and everything is done with a rapidity which is so delightful that it seems like the virtuosity of an artist. One leaves the barber shop of the "George Washington" feeling better oiled and curled than Petronne when he left the hands of his masseurs.

The passengers were very much delighted when they got out of bed in the morning to receive their

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morning paper. It was the ship's newspaper which came to us still damp from the press. This press provided the bills of fare, the programs of concerts and other entertainments, as well as the visiting-cards which were seen on the door of every cabin giving the names and titles of everybody on board from the King down.

The paper, called "The Hatchet," and having as its motto "I cannot tell a lie," gets its news by wireless and tells its readers what is happening all over the world. The King and his suite were thus able to follow events in Belgium as well as in Italy. They read about d'Annunzio and Fiume, and the defeats of the Bolsheviks with the first rumors of the death of Lenine.

Different subjects are also treated in "The Hatchet," literary, historical and philosophical. They gave me the honor of asking me to write an article. I wrote on the Belgian secret press, knowing that the Americans were very curious about the mystery of the newspapers which continued to appear during the occupation. This article was so popular that I found it published in the newspapers on my arrival in New York.

The American sense of humor is not lacking in the "Hatchet." Thus one finds on the title-

page this statement: "The largest circulation on the Atlantic Ocean."

I wish to say a few words about the movies because they made several hours of that long crossing pass very pleasantly. Every night after dinner there was a moving-picture performance in the great hall of the "George Washington." It was strange to notice in these dramas and comedies certain American characteristics among which is a reverence for loyalty and integrity and at the same time a strong hatred of malice and lack of faith. The Americans especially admire energy and strength of will. In their plays the hero is always a paragon of strength and integrity. The actors make very few gestures, but their faces are full of expression. When I say few gestures, however, I am speaking, of course, of the dramas. Because when it is a question of comedy, Good Lord, what an avalanche of thrusts with swords and revolvers, shots, or kicks and attacks with teeth and fists! Americans are grown-up children; they laugh at an upset and certain drolleries even make them weep.

The night the King came on board a film of great pathos was going on. The jealous lover was advancing cunningly towards his rival, re-

volver in hand. The audience followed the scene, straining their necks forward, their eyes fixed on the screen. In order to intensify the emotion, a negro had been placed in the wings to fire off a pistol the moment the hero fired his. It happened that the negro's pistol went off a few seconds before that of the hero. This incident, purely burlesque, which merely made us Europeans smile, created such hilarity that it drowned the orchestra, the noise of the ocean and the sound of the engines. If a steamer had crossed us at this moment, it would have heard the "George Washington" laughing!

Jokes of the same sort are found in some of their plays. In one scene two actors were carrying on a serious conversation. All of a sudden, without any warning, one of the actors kicked the hat of his companion onto the floor. The companion made a face, a pirouette, and then as if nothing had happened, the play went solemnly on while the audience was choking and shaking with laughter.

The King spent some mornings reviewing the crew of the "George Washington" and the American troops which the ship was bringing home.

The sailors would line up on the upper deck and the soldiers on the lower. The sailors' uniforms are very effective. This military mid-Atlantic review made by our King was a wonderful sight. While the strains of the Belgian national anthem went out to sea, the tall figure of the Sovereign dominated those lines of white caps among which he walked, his hand on his cap.

After the review, the King and his suite were invited to visit the ship's machinery. We went down into that dungeon of fire and iron where the organs of the monster are hidden, penetrating into that formidable heart whose pulsations reverberate through the structure like blows from a hammer. We saw its gigantic lungs—colossal pistons—and its huge stomach—a gaping furnace stoked by men with naked torsos. As we went down the circular staircase to the bottom of the funnel, we felt as if we were being transported into one of those fantastic workshops described by Jules Verne in the "Cent Millions de la Begum." At the bottom of the abyss we found ourselves forty feet below sea level. The oppressive and burning atmosphere of the oil, the trepidation and uproar of the revolving

cranks, enormous cylinders, gnawing gears, and roaring screws, made us flee from there as if it were the infernal regions.

One evening the crew organized different games in honor of Prince Leopold—obstacle races, sack races, wrestling and boxing matches. They were very successful. At the end the Prince gave prizes to the winners—scarf pins, cigarette cases, and wrist watches. The King and Queen watched these games with interest. During the boxing matches, however, the Queen did not seem to appreciate that art of bruising the face. An expression of pity rather than enjoyment could be read on her face.

Prince Leopold, on the other hand, did not miss a single phase of the fights. He confided to me that he had often practiced sports while at school at Eton. One night he heard a journalist boasting to one of his colleagues of being an accomplished master in the art of pugilism.

“If I do not give you a demonstration right away,” the man concluded, “it is because I have not got my boxing-gloves with me.”

“You need not let that prevent you,” interrupted the Prince. “Mine are in my cabin and I will willingly lend them to you.”

It was difficult to realize the muscular strength of that boy of eighteen whom at a distance one might consider undeveloped. Are you familiar with deck tennis which is played without a racket, with a big leather ball which you throw across the net in the hope that your adversary on account of its weight and impetus will be unable to hold it and will let it slip to the ground? His Highness's fancy led him one day to choose me as his opponent in deck-tennis. In recalling that game I can still feel the sensation of the shots which the so-called "Little Prince" hurled at my stomach!

Prince Leopold seems to have a generous and upright character. His mind when he is interested is wide awake and brilliant.

I have already given the King's ideas on sport. He is so convinced of its salutary effect—I mean athletic and not savage sport—that he practices it himself. For exercise he played deck tennis for an hour every morning. His great height and remarkable strength especially, made him a "King" of deck tennis. At the risk of being indiscreet I will say that one day I saw him knock the officers on board breathless in a few

moments although they had practiced the game a great deal.

A long while ago the King had instituted a prize of 25,000 francs to be given to the author of a treatise on the best method of introducing physical exercises into our public schools and colleges. At the time at which I am writing (March, 1920) the papers announce that the prize is to be given to two Belgian authors, Mr. J. Demoor, and Mr. Fosseprez, for their work on "How a free people can acquire strength and health."

Moreover, astonishing as it may seem, the royal guest of the "George Washington" with his prestige of moral loyalty, his simple and democratic appearance, handsome carriage and skill as a sportsman, had from the very first minute become the idol of the crew. There was not a cabin in which his picture was not found, as later on after his journey through the towns of the United States, there could not have been a house in which his name was not revered.

Thus on this luxurious boat fitted out with all the comforts of life, our King went to America. What made the trip on that boat even more interesting, however, was the fact that the "George

Washington" had been built in 1903 by the Germans and captured in 1914 by the American navy. Until then it was in the gorgeous salons of this ship that the Kaiser Wilhelm II made his ocean journeys. How ironical and yet how just fate had shown herself! This "George Washington" on which the imperial pirate had dreamed one day of traveling over conquered seas after having stolen the crown of the little Kingdom of Belgium, this very ship was now carrying its ruler, Albert I, who had become the greatest king in history, towards generous America which was ready to pay homage to his glorious fame!

That night the sun set on a radiantly calm sea, going down like a ball of fire directly in front of the ship. We were sailing right towards that red light which seemed to come from the shores of America, still invisible but soon to be reached. Leaning over the railing in the reflection of that purple glow, it seemed to me that it was the first ray of the crown of glory which the American people were preparing to place on the forehead of our King.

CHAPTER II

NEW YORK

IT soon appeared, that long-looked-for America, before the eyes of the royal traveler who had been sailing towards it for nine days. The first glimpse he had of it was indeed charming. While his gaze was searching the line of the horizon toward the West in the hope of sighting land, black specks suddenly rose from that line and grew larger and larger as they drew near. They were six aeroplanes, graceful messengers of the air, by means of which America was sending us her first greeting. They came at great speed toward the ship, and flew so close, almost grazing her masts, that it seemed as if they wished to caress her with their wings.

Suddenly, we saw the shores of the new world and gradually the panorama of the Hudson unrolled before our eyes. Numerous cottages and villas, rather like Swiss chalets in their style of architecture, were scattered on the side of the

cliffs of the shore. What a charming sight the verdure of those cliffs presented to our eyes! In spite of the mist they seemed so luxuriant, and their coloring was so bright that the eyes of all, still full of the unending gray uniformity of the ocean, remained fixed on them in delightful ecstasy.

Five large American destroyers flying the Belgian colors formed our retinue. The aeroplanes roared over our heads. Ships of every sort passed us by and overtook us, from warships with steel hulls down to the ferry which carried on its deck an entire train, and the trans-Atlantic giant which was conveying its thousands of passengers to some distant port. As a sign of greeting all those boats blew their sirens or fired volleys from their guns, filling the harbor with a great noise. Heavy clouds of smoke coming forth from the funnels of steamers and factory chimneys darkened the sky. This scene reminded me of the etchings of Pennell. It was indeed the port of New York with its smoke and fog out of which rose the hum of great labor and incessant, feverish activity. On the shore, piled up like ghosts in the fog, were gigantic factories, steel docks to which were moored barges of every size

whose long-necked cranes were outlined against the sky. Suddenly, right before us in the middle of the river a statue appeared, tall as a tower, raising its torch up in the sky and seeming to cry out to all those arriving amid the noise and the sarabands of smoke: "This is great New York, the capital of the world, the royal city of business, noise, life and gold!"

And now, right behind the statue, towering above it, piercing the smoke and clouds, like giants stretching their necks immoderately in order to see better out of their thousand eyes, appeared the sky-scrapers of New York. From their heights they seemed to lean over the river, staring curiously in order to find out what was going on and see the visitor whose arrival was creating such disturbance.

What was in reality occurring was at the same time simple and magnificent. The "George Washington" had come up alongside of a huge pier projecting into the Hudson. A gangway was thrown across. And while from the shores decorated with flags the Brabançonne echoed to the sky, the King, pale and stately, whose tall figure seemed to us at that moment surrounded by a halo of light and glory, passed over the

bridge and set foot on the earth of the New World. He was the first sovereign whom the great American democracy had ever welcomed officially.

Because of the absence of President Wilson, who was ill at the time, the Vice-President, Mr. Marshall, with Secretary of State Lansing and Brand Whitlock, American Minister to Belgium, at his side, came up to the King and said :

“Sire, the New World, as it is called over there in Europe, has already received many great and illustrious visitors. Ever since Christopher Columbus discovered this continent, numerous persons who have landed here have been well received by the American people. Today, however, there is not a single man among this people, noted for its love of liberty, fidelity, justice and energy, who does not bow down before you, Sire, the champion of integrity and loyalty, before you, the King, who preferred the Via Dolorosa to all others because it was the way of honor.”

The orator ended with this splendid peroration, the sublime eloquence of which cannot fail to be admired :

“I bid you welcome to this republic, O greatest King of the most courageous people history

has ever known. Come to us with your honored flag which you have kept unravished. Come among a people who love fidelity and courage, you who at the same time that you were showing the world that treaties are not scraps of paper, were also showing that the words Faith and Loyalty must be placed above Crown and Kingdom."

When the frantic demonstration with which this speech was welcomed had ceased, we waited for the King's answer. Our Sovereign, however, could hardly speak. His throat was choked with emotion. In broken phrases and a voice hardly intelligible, he thanked the Vice-President in the following beautiful words:

"I bring to great America the infinite gratitude of my little people."

This was the reception of the American government, the official greeting of the Republic. Another welcome, however, was to exceed it, a welcome still more moving because nothing could control it in its spontaneity and warmth—the welcome of the American people.

In order, however, to realize the unprecedented warmth of this reception, one must think for a moment what New York is really like, this great

and vibrating city, a veritable Babel where all languages are spoken and all races mixed, a caravansary of all the world where six million individuals belonging to all the nations on earth are crowded together. To mention one of the great nations, let us take Italy. New York is the largest Italian city in the world since its trans-Alpine population exceeds that of Rome. New York is preëminently a cosmopolitan city which has no particular characteristic because it has all, and in which one finds that one is nowhere because one is everywhere. But it was this New York whose gigantic frame was throbbing with the formidable energy of life, which rushed to greet the King on the sidewalks and at the myriad of windows.

As if in a dream, the motors of our Sovereign and his suite advanced through those great avenues from which rose the most deafening noise which had ever reached our ears. Behind a cordon of soldiers were pushed together men and women of whom one saw only the frenzy and contorsion of their shouting mouths. Jutting out over each other, these human masses were arranged in layers at the windows from the sidewalk up to the top of the tall skyscrapers, mak-

ing a double border of living cliffs. With shrill whistles, serpentine spirals and basketfuls of many-colored confetti which floated about in the sunlight fell from above. Even whole piles of newspapers fluttered down on our heads. It is well known that the Americans consider any manner of expressing their approbation satisfactory if it is sufficiently noisy. Not satisfied with whistling, some had brought sirens and claxons with them. Even better still, a thousand workers had gathered in front of what seemed to be a metallurgical factory, each with a piece of iron in one hand and a hammer in the other. When the King appeared, they banged away with full force.

A great many comments have been made on this New York reception; we considered it magnificent and overpowering but perhaps a little naïve, a little simple if not savage. Perhaps! But a fact which must be taken into consideration before everything else and which should fill us with national pride, is that on that day as our King drove by, the heart of a people was bestowed upon us. How valuable such a gift is when the heart is that of the American people, the most generous and powerful nation in the

world, and when it is given at the dawn of that future of democracy and progress when the relations between states will no longer depend upon the ambitions and intrigues of a handful of despots, but on the will and temper of the people themselves!

After this popular reception, the King was taken to the City Hall where Mayor Hyman conferred upon him the title of citizen of New York.

The great municipal council hall of the City Hall was too small to hold the members of the aristocracy of New York who desired to attend the ceremony. The newspapers reported that never in the history of the city had a denser and more enthusiastic crowd been packed in that hall. It was under the name of Albert the Great that the King had the freedom of the city conferred upon him. I quote here some sentences from the Mayor's speech:

"The city of New York is happy to receive among its citizens Albert the Great, the soldier-king who has won the admiration of the whole world.

"With deep emotion we also greet her who was his faithful companion in his most dangerous

hours, and whose devoted care kept up the courage of those who fought for their country.

“Belgium was the pivot on which the war turned. It was her cry of alarm and heroism which called to arms liberty-loving people and united them in an indissoluble alliance.

“The government of that country, religious as well as civil, is in competent hands which have undergone great trials and have been found equal to their task. I am speaking of that splendid triumvirate formed by the King, the Queen and Cardinal Mercier—the soldier, the woman and the priest, whose judgments matured in the great trial.

“In the name of the people of this city, I have the pleasure of calling Your Majesties citizens of New York, the city which bore on its first coats of arms the name of “New Amsterdam,” a city whose history tells of services rendered at all times in the cause of liberty and democracy, a city proud of its Americanism—the glorious city of New York.”

When the mayor finished, a formidable three cheers coming from every mouth made the frame of the building resound. I must mention the following characteristic of “Americanism”—the

shrill voices of the women were predominant in this shout. The voices of the women were also predominant when the orchestra started "The Star Spangled Banner," and all joined in singing the anthem at the top of their lungs. I also noticed another characteristic: in America the people, and even members of society, seem to know the words of the national anthem.

Is New York a beautiful city?

If one means by this that the aspect of this city gives an artistic impression, I can certainly answer in the negative. It is even ugly, ugly because of its lack of proportion, or rather because of its extravagance of proportion. Those buildings of thirty or forty stories, those hulks which dump their bulky masses in every corner, have an extremely ridiculous appearance. Some are so absurdly big that they make one want to laugh. If St. Gudule's cathedral of Brussels or Notre-Dame of Paris were transported to New York, they would find as their neighbor one of those giants which would look at them with its thousand stupid eyes, robbing them of all their dignity.

New York is also ugly because of the profusion

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of enormous skeletons of steel, thrust into the sky. All around in the air there are too many pieces of iron, bent and interlacing each other distortedly. At your feet are skylights below which trains fly; and above all that, fastened to façades and roofs, a multitude of steel braces support advertisements on billboards whose incoherent confusion stuns and fatigues the mind. Still, New York has the beauty that an imposing mass creates.

Since I have mentioned these advertisements, I must say a word about them. Those signs, which in the daytime are merely annoying, become at night a charming sight. During her stay in New York, the Queen expressed the desire to go down Broadway, famous for the number of its illuminations, at night. The section so prettily named by the New Yorkers "The Great White Way" is indeed one of the wonders of the huge American city. Accompanied by the Comtesse de Caraman-Chimay and a few detectives who followed discreetly behind, Queen Elizabeth thus ventured across Broadway, lost in the crowd which jostled her without recognizing in her the queen whom that very morning they had been greeting with frantic joy. Feeling at ease be-

cause of her incognito, she walked slowly down that avenue filled with dazzling brightness.

Perhaps one can imagine the sight of those thousand inscriptions of fire which are lighted and extinguished alternately, those blazing arrows which suddenly rising up in the dark burn one's eyes with their effulgence; but what certainly passes all imagination, what must indeed be seen before one can believe its reality, is the ingenuity displayed by the Americans in their animated advertisements. On the top of a huge skyscraper is a cat lying in wait for a mouse. Suddenly Puss makes a bound, but her prey escapes and she falls to the ground with her paws in the air between which a huge cigarette whose name is written on it in letters of fire suddenly lands. An automobile of light is sailing in the sky. Three people are comfortably seated in the spacious carriage. Stones and dust are thrown up from the wheels. And suddenly these very stones become shaped and write the name of an automobile firm in the sky.

One can imagine the proportions of these advertisements perched on the top of countless stories. The cigarette appearing between the cat's paws is no less than ten yards long and

two yards wide; the motor is four times its normal size. All these advertisements burn side by side, rivaling each other in brightness and originality to attract the eye of the passer-by.

There are also others even more extraordinary. On a façade a young girl is balancing on a swing. At each plunge of the swing which flies over an arc of more than thirty yards, her loosened hair floats in the breeze. Here is a huge pencil which hobgoblins running on the roofs carry at arm's length. There two boxers hurl blows at each other. Over there is a fat old man who faints with joy in a comfortable rocking-chair.

But Times Square in the very center of Broadway is where the Great White Way attains the magic enchantment of the "Arabian Nights." When the Queen reached it it was almost midnight, and it was just as light as in broad daylight. Above the Square the sky was glowing with the lights of the city. An incomparable enchantment to the eyes! In this purple sky, roses and flowers of every shade slowly open and close their petals, fountains of diamonds spout and fall back into basins which they overflow and from which they trickle down to the ground; butterflies with glistening wings flutter about;

and then above this, still higher up as if to crown it all, two peacocks on the top of the largest building display a wheel on which the whole gamut of colors from blue to red and yellow scintillates.

I shall not stop to enumerate the extraordinary manifestations which succeeded each other during the three days which our Sovereigns spent in New York. I shall leave the celebration in Central Park where 50,000 children gathered together on the lawns sang the Brabançonne waving the stars and stripes, and that other manifestation in Madison Square Garden, that huge colosseum almost ten times as large as the Salle du Cinquantenaire in Brussels, where cheers rolled like thunder into space above the heads of the crowd.

I shall leave all that to get to our special train in which the Sovereigns and their suite embarked and where they were to live for a whole month while they twice traversed the United States from ocean to ocean. This train served us as a rolling hotel to which we came back after visiting each city. Besides their bedrooms, the King, Queen and Prince had a salon beautifully decorated in green silk, with little tables, arm-

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chairs and lamp shades of various colors. This salon, attached to the end of the train, opened out on a large platform, a kind of balcony, which looked out on the country through which we passed.

CHAPTER III

FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC

THE first city after New York which the King visited was Boston, the intellectual and aristocratic center of America. In the cathedral of this city the meeting between our Sovereigns and Cardinal Mercier took place.

According to the local newspapers the solemn mass celebrated on Sunday in honor of the King of the Belgians in the cathedral of Boston was one of the most moving ceremonies which this city had ever witnessed.

The King, the Queen and Prince Leopold and their suite mounted the steps of the cathedral between a double row of church dignitaries who, dressed in their sumptuous robes of state (green tunics trimmed with gold and silver), had taken their places on the stone steps. Penetrating through an enormous crowd, the Sovereigns reached the choir where Monseigneur O'Connell, cardinal-archbishop of Boston, and Monseigneur Mercier received them. Standing at the foot of

the altar, Monseigneur O'Connell addressed a resounding speech of welcome to Albert the Great.

After this the King, followed by the Queen, went towards the stall which was designated for him in the choir. Having crossed himself piously, he knelt down. At the right of the altar under a magnificent dais of velvet and gold was seated Monseigneur Mercier. The Cardinal was wearing his great purple mantle. In this imposing frame the hieratic face of our prelate wore a peculiar expression of grandeur and nobility. As General Jacques remarked in pointing to the King, the Queen and the Cardinal, the three greatest personages of Belgium found themselves at that minute in this far-off cathedral of America.

The great crowd of people, the hymns sung by two hundred choir boys, the marvelous solos by one of the most famous American singers, and especially the speech of Cardinal Mercier, who, having mounted to the pulpit, thanked the American people for the generous help they had given to Belgium, made of this religious service a moving ceremony never to be forgotten.

I ask a simple question :

That day was Sunday. On this Sunday at the same hour this same Catholic mass was being celebrated in all the cities of the earth, in the towns of our distant Europe as in those of this great America, and other parts of the world—and not only in the cities, but even in the smallest villages—the same mass, according to the same ritual and the same liturgy, with the same motions of the officiating priest and the same prayers, and in the same language. . . . This Roman Catholic religion, which in spite of all the persecutions and heresies has thus spread itself so extensively, does it not really possess supernatural power, even divine? . . . It is just a question.

In America one meets no professed unbelievers or sceptics. Everybody pretends to be a Christian. Of these Christian people, half of them are communicants. But this half is itself divided into two pretty equal parts. To the first belong the adepts of Protestantism and of diverse creeds; to the second, the believers in Catholicism. One can thus say roughly that one fourth of the American people are Catholics. Nevertheless, this Catholic group grows from day to day through extraordinarily numerous conver-

sions of young Protestants who find in the Catholic faith a more complete realization of their ideal.

As Balzac once wrote: "Once God is recognized by the unbeliever, he throws himself into absolute Catholicism, which, from the point of view of system, is complete."

I called Boston an intellectual city. Boston is indeed the center of American thought. There are its scholars, its thinkers and its artists. The birthplace of Edgar Allan Poe and Emerson, this great city lies calm, favorable to meditation and study. It contains the oldest university in America, founded in 1769 by Harvard, whose name it bears.

Harvard University decided to confer on the King of the Belgians the degree of Doctor of Law. On this occasion an imposing ceremony took place. All the doctors and professors of the faculty were gathered together in the great hall of the college, dressed in their long purple gowns bordered with ermine with their individual hoods.

In the presence of this assembly, President Lowell conferred upon our Sovereign the degree of Doctor of Law in the following terms:

“The members of the Board of Directors and Faculty of Harvard University have come together to-day to pay homage to the acts accomplished by your Majesty and the Queen, to assure you of their compassion for the sufferings of your people, and to express their admiration for your proud refusal to permit the tyrant to march through the land, and for the self-respect which preferred the calamity of a ruthless invasion to loss of honor and breach of national faith. When we saw you doing these things, we understood that the King of the Belgians was every inch a king. That is why Harvard University to-day is conferring on the King of the Belgians because he was the defender of right, the degree of Doctor of Law.”

In order to appreciate the great honor conferred upon our Sovereign by Harvard University, it must be realized that it is only the fifth time that the University has bestowed this honorary degree at any other time than at Commencement. The four persons who received this honor previously were George Washington, who obtained it in 1776, Andrew Jackson in 1833,

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Prince Henry of Prussia in 1902, and General Joffre in 1917.

At the bottom of the parchment which was given to the King guaranteeing his degree, were written the words of Shakespeare: "Aye, every inch a King."

I have called Boston an aristocratic city. That is indeed because old families who can trace their ancestors three and four generations back live there. A relative antiquity one may say. Very true, but we are in young America, and it must, moreover, be said that this gilded aristocracy betrays its origin at the first glance of a European.

It was in New York principally, however, that it was permissible to make some cutting remarks in the realm of customs. There the wealth of an individual determines his social position. His income is his title of nobility. In New York you are not asked who you are but how much are you worth. If you are worth a million, you belong to the aristocracy even if your father was a bootblack.

The King was invited to lunch in the center of this New York aristocracy, the Bankers' Club.

What would ancient Europe of the seventeenth century have thought if it had known that one of its grandsons, of the purest royal blood, should some day sit down at table with men who had no other royalty but that of the dollar?

In this banquet hall were gathered the greatest financiers of America. As some one said, many more millions of dollars were represented there than in the whole of Paris and London together. We met the steel king and many others there. When they were presented to our Sovereign, they showed great deference for his moral courage, but as for anything more—well, they were kings too!

Nevertheless, joking aside, I was very much impressed by the appearance and physiognomy of these men. Almost all of them were tall with vigorous complexions, square shoulders and firm wrists. The blood of a young and healthy race ran through their veins. Their faces were particularly expressive. In the shrewdness and penetration of their eyes could be read ingenuity and intelligence. The curves of their compressed lips, like the lines in their foreheads and their white hair, revealed the accomplishment of their

task. Though America does not possess a nobility of ancestry, it possesses that of work, and especially of individual merit.

We sat down. Can you imagine a banquet, a sumptuous banquet without the smallest drop of wine or liqueur? It was, nevertheless, the gloomy reality. As I write these lines I still see placed in front of the King that solitary glass filled with hopelessly limpid water on which a few small pieces of ice floated sadly about. That endless ice water during this long journey! Reader, you know by hearsay the prohibition of wines and liqueurs in America. I do not know how you feel about it, but I maintain that to judge it rightly one must sit three times a day for two months before a glass of ice water. What an obsession! Wherever you go they offer it to you. In many public buildings, large stores, banks and hotels a fountain of ice water is at the disposal of the visitors. If you go in a restaurant, even before you have given your order, the waiter pours you out a glass of ice water. And at night just before going to bed there is that same glass in which little specks of ice are floating, sitting invariably on the table next to your bed.

During the journey the King easily bore this privation from all wine and all liqueur. He is an abstainer by principle and by preference. But such was not the case with the members of his suite. There was perpetual regret at the bottom of their hearts with a constant subject for joking. One of them whom I asked one morning if he had slept well answered me: "Sleep well! Just imagine, an angel came to me in a dream with a drop of benedictine in the hollow of his hand which he poured through my lips!"

In certain large American restaurants the bill of fare bore the inscription "Beer." Beer! We jumped for joy and ordered it in haste, and then, warning us not to drink too much of it, they brought us that mixture which is called tisane in Europe.

Nevertheless, one must not think that the masses of the American people rejoice over prohibition. Quite the contrary, they recriminate and lament. Rich America, they say, has become the country of arid dryness.

The way in which the people were led to vote for what they regret to-day is well known. The question of the prohibition of alcohol was put to the electorate in the following manner: "Do

you believe in shutting the saloons in your district?"

At the beginning of the campaign for prohibition the voters, in their anxiety to do away with the abuses of the saloon, voted in the affirmative. But since their vote entailed the prohibition of the sale of all kinds of alcoholic beverages, they saw that they had been fooled. They were indeed anxious to suppress the abuse of excessive intoxication but they wanted to keep the right to drink wine, beer and cider in their own homes. Now by their own vote they can no longer do so.

Nevertheless, this prohibition was only for a certain length of time which was to end as soon as peace was declared. But in the delay over the ratification of the treaty, people had time to perceive the advantages of this temporary prohibition. Also on January 16, 1920, an amendment to the Constitution made prohibition general and final. From this time on all over the United States the manufacture, transportation, importation and sale of drinks containing more than one and one half per cent alcohol has been forbidden.

It is only right, however, to add that this prohibition of alcohol has had more satisfactory re-

sults in the realm of morals. Here are some figures taken from a recent study of the records. Since prohibition has been in effect, public drunkenness has diminished from sixty to ninety per cent; crime has diminished equally. Moreover, it is said that the State of Ohio is selling one of its penitentiaries on account of the dearth of guests. The largest hospital in Philadelphia is closing its alcoholic ward, and the special ward of the famous Bellevue Hospital in New York, which registered one hundred and seventy patients a week, now only counts eighteen on the average.

To return to our banquet, I noticed that Americans smoke during their meals. They light cigarettes in the intervals between the courses. What a frightful custom, you will exclaim! And then all that smoke in the mouth must spoil everything, or at least neutralize the taste. Yet, perhaps this is the reason. As a patient is given an anesthetic to deaden the pain of the knife, is there not perhaps some advantage in neutralizing one's palate against American cooking, that disastrous cooking?

We regained our special train in Boston. We

got on board at nine o'clock at night and woke the next morning at eight to find ourselves at Niagara Falls on the Canadian border, more than five hundred miles from Boston, carried there without noticing it like the character in the "Arabian Nights" who traveled on a magic carpet while he slept.

I must say a word in passing about the quality of American trains. I am not speaking of the royal train, which was a special, but of trains in general. They are indeed run with extraordinary comfort. There is only one class for all travelers. The millionaire finds himself sitting opposite his servant. Thus wills American democracy. The cars are extraordinarily clean. It is true that the public helps to keep them so. The advertisements which one sees placarded in our trains begging us not to harm the woodwork and upholstery are entirely superfluous in the United States. The American considers that all public goods are under his personal protection. He has, moreover, the greatest respect for the property of other people, even when that other person is the government. It is a matter of education. Surely American education reveals certain sides at which it is permissible to laugh,

but on the other hand it teaches us lessons which we could learn to our advantage.

The trains are especially arranged for the night. The reason for this is that Americans travel more by night than by day. It is an economy in time, and time is money. It is true that in this enormous country where great distances separate towns from one another the slightest change of place is considerable. The European who takes a night journey in an American train cannot help being struck by the intimacy between men and women. As the space between the curtains and the berth is very narrow, one sees gentlemen and ladies getting chastely undressed in the aisles. In the morning everybody hurries half dressed to the washroom. And all this with the greatest purity of morals. Nobody would allow himself to joke about it even mildly.

I do not believe that there is a country in the world with a higher morality than America. They are not only chaste in their conduct but in their thoughts. Even in the conversations among men those spicy stories and anecdotes which divert us are banished. They are particularly ignorant of that art of obscene insinuations

and subtle words with double meanings which is so characteristically Latin. That belongs peculiarly to the French. Doubtless they judge us aright. It is a fact that one will always be able to pronounce "gauloiserie" while never saying "Americanism." The word would not suit Uncle Sam, any more than the thing itself.

Talking about these trains, they told me that under certain circumstances when there was a great crowd strange men and women would sleep in the same section. The man would take the upper berth and the woman the lower. Is that right? I do not know, but if this does happen, I am sure that it is with the greatest propriety. Of course I should not like to set up this rule of proper conduct as an absolute law. In morals there is no absolute law. But it remains nevertheless that in America the abuse would be the exception while with us it would be the rule for the most part.

Since Louis Hennepin, the Belgian explorer, described Niagara Falls for the first time in 1663, much has been written about this wonder. Still, as Roosevelt said, one can only realize what

these falls are really like when one has seen them with one's own eyes.

The King remained for a long while leaning over the railing of one of the rocks which dominated the falls. His wide open eyes and the delighted expression on his face showed his admiration for this great river which swept down in immense waves, hurling itself from a height of 167 feet. A column of mist and water-dust rose from the abyss across which a rainbow, like a jewel sparkling through golden hair, described its luminous arc. As one of the guides explained to our Sovereign, scientists calculated that it must have taken the river 35,000 to 75,000 years to gnaw through the coralline stone, which formerly made it change its course and precipitate itself at this spot. Fifteen million cubes of water fall there per minute.

From where he was standing, the King suddenly caught sight of little wooden bridges at the bottom of the roaring, boiling abyss which the daring Americans had built from rock to rock hardly more than a hundred yards from the foot of the cataract.

The dauntlessness of our Sovereign is well

known. He immediately expressed a desire to take the trip across the bridges. Wherever the King goes the Queen goes too. She also wanted to be part of the expedition. And naturally the "Suite" followed, among whom I knew more than one would have preferred not to step into the costumes which were given us. Except for the helmet which was replaced by a rubber hood, it was really a diver's suit which they put on the royal pair and their companions. When the explorers came out of their cabins thus muffled up and met each other, everybody was frankly hilarious. Indeed, this coarse uniform was not flattering to our little Queen, who is always so graceful. We read on her face a real terror when she had to pass in front of the inevitable lenses of the herd of photographers and moving-picture men stationed, as they never failed to be, in every corner.

Huddled on the little bridges to which we descended, our little troop contemplated the gorgeous spectacle of the river, which crashed at our feet with a great noise like an immense cry of horror.

Under the bridge ran the river, boiling and hissing with the speed of an express train, less

than three feet away from us. A spray of rain lashed our rubber coats like hailstones and hit us in the face, while gusts of wind took our breath away.

"You would think we were in the trenches," said General Jacques, twisting his long mustache from which water flowed fast.

The King and Queen were delighted with their little excursion to the bridges. "A walk like that is worth more than the cures in all our sanatoria," said our Sovereign, smiling.

Sometimes on the steamer and sometimes in the electric railway which runs along the side of the cliffs, Their Majesties wandered around the charming and magnificent shores of the river. At one moment when we were looking intently at a large mansion situated on the top of a hill with a wonderful panorama, General Jacques with his usual geniality slapped me on the shoulder. "If you give me a hundred thousand livres a year," he said, pointing to the house, "I will live there willingly the rest of my life."

"I should say so, General!"

But suddenly the hero of Dixmude changed his mind on second thought. His eyes expressed a deep emotion as he said:

“Well, no. All that is not worth my old place at Vielsalm. That is the little corner where I want to grow old and die.”

Leaving Niagara Falls, we dashed towards the West, crossing the great states of Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois. To give an idea of their size, it is sufficient to say that some of the Middle-Western states are larger than France.

Of Ohio I will only mention the overwhelming reception which our Sovereigns received in Toledo, the native town of the American Minister to Belgium. It was an act of graceful delicacy on the part of our King to insist on stopping in that city to thank her for having given us that great and glorious friend of Belgium, Brand Whitlock.

After Ohio, Illinois. I must say a few words about an extraordinary city through which the royal train, nevertheless, passed without stopping, because the German element is so predominant there that it numbers almost as many German inhabitants as American. It seems that a city is built in America as quickly as a monument is erected in Europe. Chicago is a prodigious example of this. This city, which now

contains almost four million souls, was only a hamlet of a hundred cottages in 1831, barely ninety years ago. This is even more remarkable if we recall that Chicago, built entirely of wood, was completely destroyed by fire in 1871. It took a week to raze it to the ground. But behold the miracle of American speed! Chicago was rebuilt, this time in stone, with such rapidity that a local newspaper wrote this sentence which has since become famous: "The fire which found Chicago a city of wood left it transformed into stone."

A huge and cosmopolitan city where Germans, Irish, Scandinavians, Poles and Bohemians elbow each other.

About forty languages are spoken there. Newspapers appear printed in ten languages and religious services are held in twenty different dialects.

The colossal industry of this "cité-ardente," the first market of the world because of its trade in cereals and preserved meat, is famous across the sea. Yet at the time we passed through it that landscape dotted with huge factories and covered with an extraordinary network of railroads presented an appearance which was as

unexpected as it was deceptive. The cars lay motionless on their rails. The cranes, windlasses, cables, all the apparatus of iron and steel of the most intense human activity lay inert as if congealed in death. Not a workman amid this silence. Nothing but here and there rows of soldiers, their guns on their shoulders.

The King found out the reason for all this when they told him that a strike had just been called among the laboring population of the city. You see that the Bolshevik virus penetrates far.

You can imagine the financial loss which a general strike must bring to a city like Chicago. If the enforced idleness lasts several days, the loss must be reckoned in millions, perhaps in hundreds of millions of dollars.

In speaking of this I must say that America is afraid of Bolshevism. It watches its progress with distress. Every day the newspapers devote long, anxious articles to the subject. One of the first questions asked of a traveler arriving from Europe is:

"Is Bolshevism still making progress in your country? Will it continue to spread? And how about strikes?"

Strikes! The United States was infested with

them like a plague. During the King's journey we counted no less than one hundred and twenty-five trades in which the workmen had laid down their tools. Still the government defends itself with extraordinary energy. Our newspapers reported in the first days of January, 1920, that five hundred arrests had been made in New York in a single night. The same was true that night in twenty-three American cities. I could see that Uncle Sam had his own arguments.

I must add that this fear of Bolshevism seems to be one of the causes which paralyzed the action of the Conference on Labor in Washington, where the delegates of the various powers of the labor world met recently. Thinking it had discovered fuel for Bolshevism in this conference, the press carried out a conspiracy of silence which eventually smothered it by preventing the public from becoming interested.

But we are "burning" Chicago. In order to ward off the fatigue which our Sovereigns were likely to feel, the American government had decided to do away with all official receptions for a few days and transport its august guests with-

out stopping to the Pacific Coast, where they could rest in some retired spot. A series of states were crossed with a speed entirely American. The records were broken, we were told, because in that country they adore to break records, as I shall have an opportunity of showing more clearly later on.

"But is this speed not dangerous for the King?" I asked a conductor.

"Oh, no, sir; every precaution has been taken. Three special engineers are on board. The railway system has been perfectly studied."

And I can still hear that man finishing phlegmatically: "Besides, an engine is constantly preceding us by five or six miles. In this way if there should be a collision, the engine would be wrecked, not this train."

Being very curious about everything that has to do with locomotives and the art of driving a train, our King, during the journey, expressed a desire to ride in the cab of the engine. He was thus able to see at close range how the monster was operated. It was this visit of the King to the engine from which the newspapers wove that famous legend of the King running his own

train. In reality our Sovereign never touched a lever.

On this occasion we noticed again a trait that is characteristically American: the ingenuity and extraordinary daring of the photographers and moving-picture men. They were always in every corner, ready to catch in their cameras the occurrences and scenes which interested them. No difficulty, no danger prevented them from "filming" any sensational event. While the King was on the engine, did we not see one of these bold fellows turning the crank of his movie machine, perched on the tender in danger of being knocked down by the wind?

When the King arrived at New York harbor, some of these bold photographers had installed themselves at an incredible height on a steel beam, which swung out from the roof of a skyscraper and seemed to be suspended over the water. A slight dizziness, a false motion, and it would have meant a plunge into the abyss below for these unfortunate beings. The most ingenious and intrepid among them enjoy great popularity. The magazines and newspapers pay enormous sums to secure the services of these king-reporters.

One word about the American press. It is noisy and sensational. For this reason it has no other aim than that of exciting curiosity and of making itself read. Hardly scrupulous even about the truth, it considers everything true which is probable or even possible. In no way a moralist, it has no anxiety for apostleship. It does not lead public opinion or educate it, but follows it, flatters it, and tries to please it. Its soul is mercantile before everything else.

Under the signature of Saint-Sixte, who is familiar with the Americans, the "*Mercure de France*" has recently published a study which, though a little severe, seems to us nevertheless to be exact enough: "By its headlines, which are written with abbreviations that are often incomprehensible to the newcomer, the press satisfies the need of its readers for emotion and feverish haste. Always aiming for effect, it incessantly sacrifices everything to the desire of astonishing them by the publication of the most extraordinary and most uncontrolled news. The quality or truth matters little provided it prints the quantity. What characterizes the American press in my mind is its inquisitive spirit, which consequently becomes tyrannical. There is noth-

ing sacred to the press in the United States; the reporters busy themselves with everything, stick their noses into everything, write about everything under the sun; they must be omniscient and they are omnipotent. They must let nothing prevent them from accomplishing a professional tour-de-force. An eminent Frenchman living in New York goes on business to a western city and dies at a hotel there. A reporter who is shrewder than the others succeeds in finding out who the deceased man was and in getting the telephone number of his home. In order to be the first to publish an obituary and announce this interesting event, he does not hesitate to telephone to the widow, to tell her of the death and get from her the main points for his article. And no one cries out against this abomination; no, it is a little excessive perhaps, but nevertheless typical. Another example. It is well known that in most American cities hotels are closed to unmarried couples. If a man and woman should succeed in breaking this rule, and, as might happen, should they be discovered that very night by a raid of the police, they will not only be dragged before a judge to answer for their violation of the law, but it is only too likely

that the names of the delinquents will be published in all the papers the next morning. These two examples are taken from among a thousand. One can literally say that the investigating spirit of the American reporters does not recoil before any susceptibility, or before any decency, however reasonable or natural it may be.

“For them the barrier of private life does not exist at all; moreover, the word privacy is entirely unknown to them. And it is this which explains not only the political omnipotence of the press but also its social tyranny.”

What I have said of the legend of the Engineer-King and of certain characteristics of the press, gives me an opportunity of saying a word about a tendency peculiar to the American nature. Doubtless, of course, people all over the world are familiar with this trait. But the Americans themselves have the best word to describe it, probably because they feel they have more need for it—bluff. And the virtuosos in the art of bluffing are surely the Yankee reporters. What an art! We must certainly gratefully acknowledge that they manipulated it wonderfully in enhancing the popularity of our Sovereigns. I will give a few examples of this.

The American people are infatuated on the subject of sport. So these clever journalists installed the King in front of the levers of his engine and made him break the speed records. Americans admire, above everything else, hard-working men who have made their own way in life. A rather difficult trait to reconcile with the hereditary royalty of Albert I. But do not think, however, that such a small matter baffled the reporters. They discovered the street in New York in which our King worked, earning his living as a newspaper reporter when he made his first journey to the United States twenty years ago. This was printed in large headlines in certain New York papers. The story was so popular that a San Francisco paper took it up later on and made it more lively by putting these words in the mouth of the King when he was passing through the city: "Well, look at that newspaper office! It is there I worked twenty years ago! I even remember that I was dismissed for reporting some event badly."

They also took care of the popularity of the Queen. The same San Francisco paper stated that during the war she found herself at one

time in such disastrous straits that she pawned her jewels at the Mont-de-Piété.

But surely the record example of American bluff is the story of the lion cage. Every one knows this story, the echoes of which reached Europe and even Belgium, where foolish exploits are not popular and where it created some uneasiness. I may be permitted to relate that little episode as I saw it with my own eyes.

Walking through the valley of the Yosemite, which I shall have a chance to describe later on, the small party of our Sovereigns and their suite were visiting an Indian encampment when we saw a large cage divided by a partition into two compartments. There were two lions inside that betrayed two peculiarities, the first of which, and probably the most striking, was that they were not lions at all, but what we call in Europe pumas—American lions—a kind of intermediary species between a cat and a small leopard. The other interesting thing about these animals was that they had been taken from the nest in their earliest infancy and had known no other society but that of man, whom they probably feared less than their own kind. Make-believe lions, most peaceful and gentle lions! They were so darling,

these little lions who purred as they rubbed their heads against the bars of their prison, that Queen Elizabeth was touched, and following the guard who went into the cage, petted one of them. The Queen's coat had a border of fur. Smelling this, the little creature put out his paw to play with it. This fur which aroused an appetite of the wild beast, this tap of the paw. . . . The reporters made of this an international sensation. They pictured the Queen of Belgium struggling with the lions of America.

Since I am speaking of certain characteristics of American popular taste, I must emphasize another which has originality. It is the mania for breaking records. Possessed by a real fever for emulation, the Americans make a record of everything in art, as well as in pugilism. The best in the world; the largest in the world—they have these words incessantly on the tips of their tongues. There are certain figures which every good American knows and can rattle off in one breath!

The largest hotel in the world is situated in New York, the Hotel Pennsylvania, which contains 2,200 bedrooms, each with a bathroom and shower adjoining. (The American cannot con-

ceive of a man who has some idea of hygiene and some care as to the cleanliness of his person and does not take a bath every morning. Also in many hotels in the United States the bedroom is next to the bathroom.) I walked along the galleries of the main floor of the Pennsylvania. In the assembly-rooms of these large hotels American society congregates in the evening. They constitute the city's boulevard. Here are shops brilliantly illuminated, belonging to the hotel, and displaying jewels, furs, clothing, lingerie, perfumes, etc. A guest at the Pennsylvania can buy all his personal requirements without leaving the hotel.

The Pennsylvania has twenty-two stories. But the record for height in New York is held by the Woolworth Building, which has no less than fifty-eight floors. It is the highest stone monument in the world. Its floors are filled with bureaus of banks and other business centers. One goes from one to the other by means of elevators. Among these are locals which stop at every floor, and expresses which stop at the most important floors, the large stations. Still it was a through express which carried our Sovereign

up to the fifty-eighth floor of the Woolworth Building.

From there we could embrace with one glance the great panorama of the vibrating and smoking city. What a dream-like vision! New York was there below our eyes with its wonderful harbor, over which bridges leading to Brooklyn project; its streets running in straight lines. The pedestrians on the sidewalks seemed like a mass of diminutive ants, in and out of which moved the street cars like long yellow caterpillars. Perhaps one would be interested in knowing the number of people which one of these skyscrapers holds. During working hours 25,000 human beings are crowded into the Woolworth Building. The size of this figure can be better appreciated if we remember that one of our beautiful cities, Charleroi, has precisely the same population.

But everything is on the same scale in this gigantic country. For as the population of one of our towns could be compressed into one American building, almost the entire population of Belgium could be crowded into a single city, since Belgium has seven and a half million inhabitants while New York has six million.

I must add that this profusion of skyscrapers or cloud-pressers is found only in New York. This is explained by the narrow area of Manhattan Island, on which the city is built. Since the land was incapable of extension, the New York architects had to make up in height and depth for what was lost in breadth.

I say in height and depth. These great skyscrapers indeed go down into the depths of the earth. The Woolworth has four underground stories. But the record for underground stories is held, I was told, by a building in Philadelphia which counts fourteen. They scrape below as well as above!

Another record is that of the number of automobiles. There seem to be hardly any horses in the United States. Motors are so common everywhere that they are often used by workmen going to their factories and farmers to their fields. Some of the latter go off to their land comfortably installed in a spacious body overflowing with a pile of spades, scythes, rakes and other implements of plowing.

It is estimated that in the whole of the United States there is one automobile for every fifteen people. In New York statistics show one

for every ten inhabitants. But the record is held by Detroit with the fantastic proportion of one automobile to every inhabitant. It must be said, however, that the famous Ford factories are situated in Detroit.

Still the most singular and charming record held by the Americans is that for beauty. Some large towns have their queen of beauty. The queen takes part in the large dinners and balls given in the city. As Paul Bourget said, she figures there as well as roses at a dollar apiece and unadulterated champagne. (Bourget visited America at a time when they still had unadulterated champagne!) The queen of beauty represents her city in other towns, at boat races and horse races. She is a champion in her own way like a master at billiards or a famous boxer.

On this occasion I remember having explained to an American who was surprised that such contests did not exist in Belgium, that it would be impossible because all our women were beautiful.

It was now a week since we had left New York. Ohio, Illinois, Nebraska, Colorado and Utah had been crossed at top speed. Our train flew across

the great and uniformly flat steppes of the Far West. As we went by, they pointed out the home of the famous Buffalo Bill to the King, a little house crouching in the shade of a few trees. On these endless plains where we sometimes caught sight of ranches and herds of oxen or sheep driven by cowboys on horseback, the great "Son of the Prairies" used to practice rifle-shooting and lassoing. Nevertheless, it was in vain that we looked for Redskins, Sioux and other *apaches* who rush to attack trains with knives in their hands and war-cries on their lips. All that ceased to exist a long time ago, our American companions told us, smiling. To tell the truth, we would not have minded a little attack—make-believe, of course. But good old Fenimore Cooper has been buried such a long time.

We were now crossing the Rocky Mountains, chains of granite where the cold is intense. They are inhabited by a half savage population. Each time the train stopped in some straggling village to get water or test the wheels and axles, the King's car was immediately surrounded by natives. They knew that this king was a gallant king and they greeted him frantically. One thing, however, deceived them a little. There

was not enough pomp and show about this monarch who, standing in a simple lounging-jacket on the observation platform of his train, waved at them with his hand.

"Is that really the King of the Belgians?" one jovial fellow, whose features disappeared under his great soft felt hat, asked defiantly.

"Why, of course. Why should it not be he?"

"Because," he answered, "well, because he has not got a crown."

These good people were probably expecting a personage gorgeously attired, sitting on a throne of gold with a scepter in his hand.

It was in these parts that the King had a very amusing adventure. It is well known that our Sovereign is in the habit of getting up very early. One day when the train had stopped at about seven in the morning, the King, dressed in a simple morning suit and cap, was walking up and down the tracks when a rail worker touched his arm.

"I say, old man, is this train where the King of the Belgians is?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Could you tell me if he is up yet?"

King Albert remained thoughtful for a min-

ute as one who is not quite sure, and then said:

"No, I don't think he is up yet. They say he is very lazy and never gets up before ten o'clock."

We were going down the west slope of the Rocky Mountains and rushing towards California, which we were to reach in two days. It seemed as if we were increasing our speed in proportion as we were drawing near the promised land.

The King only stopped a couple of hours in the Mormon city, Salt Lake City. We were led into the immense tabernacle erected by the disciples of the Mormon religion. This temple, which has the peculiarity of being built entirely of wood—there is not a single bolt or a single nail in its gigantic frame—is large enough to hold 10,000 people. It was, moreover, before such a multitude that the mayor of the city addressed to his guest the traditional speech of welcome. After a recital on an organ said to be the largest in the world, we were given some very interesting points on the Mormon religion. Its fundamental principles are Faith in the Trinity and Repentance. Still, God being only the most powerful of men, every man can hope to become

a God in his turn. Among the sacraments there is baptism by immersion and the laying on of the hands. Also marriage for this world or a future life or for eternity alone. They gave me many explanations about the meaning of this marriage for eternity alone, but I left the Mormon high priests before I had understood anything about it.

Marriage for this life or a future life, however, found a peculiar answer when the royal train reached the neighboring town of Reno, the easiest place in the world where one can obtain a divorce. A sojourn of six months in this town is indeed sufficient for the local authorities to break a civil marriage simply on request. One also finds at Reno a whole colony of fashionable men and women who come from all corners of the United States to obtain a separation as soon as their term is accomplished. Only six months to separate two human beings who have sworn faithfulness for life! Still another record broken! Are the Americans just as proud of this one?

I have emphasized the high morals of the United States. If they condemn adultery, however, the Yankees are fond of divorce. It would seem as if no American girl ever got married

without thinking in the back of her mind that divorce is always left as a remedy for an unsuccessful marriage. Here are some figures which go to prove the ever-increasing vogue of conjugal ruptures. From 1867 to 1906, when the population was a little more than doubling by increasing from thirty-eight to eighty-five millions, the number of divorces increased from 12,000 to 72,000—sixfold.

An average number of divorces was established in 1900 for the principal countries of Europe and America. Per 100,000 inhabitants, this average was twelve divorces in Serbia, fifteen in Germany, seventeen in Denmark, twenty-three in France, thirty-two in Switzerland and seventy-two in America. As you see, Uncle Sam again breaks a record, and at what a margin!

Before rushing to attack the gigantic mountains of Sierra Nevada, the royal train crossed one of the arms of the Great Salt Lake on a frame bridge twenty-three miles long. This lake, very like the Dead Sea of Palestine, is one of the curiosities of the world. No fish can live in it because it is twenty per cent salt. The density of the water is such that a man jumping into it often finds that he can float without making any

motion. Divers cannot plunge below those bitter waves.

It was intensely cold on this lake when we crossed it. It is, moreover, characteristic of this climate for sudden changes of temperature to occur in going from one region to another. At certain moments the cold grips your ears; the next minute the heat makes you take off all heavy clothing. You need a strong constitution to stand these jumps which shatter your nerves. Queen Elizabeth, however, was not in the least bothered by it. As for our robust King, he always had on his lips that jovial smile of a man who has seen many things.

CHAPTER IV

CALIFORNIA

IT was on the next day that the gigantic hills of the Sierra Nevada rose before us, the last rampart which was hiding California from our eyes. The greatness of the gorges of the Sierra Nevada, that chain which runs for five hundred miles between Nevada and California, has often been described. The average height of these mountains is from nine thousand to eleven thousand feet, and some are even higher than twelve thousand feet.

All day long we rolled across this savage wilderness, hanging at times above dizzy abysses down the slopes of which were displayed panoramas rivaling by their splendor the much-praised scenes in our European Alps. In order to lose nothing of the scenery the King and the Prince crossed this chain of mountains in the cab of the engine.

Towards evening, as twilight began to fall, we realized that we were going down. The air

which had been intensely cold till then suddenly became soft and fragrant. A smell of perfume floated about, effluvia of flowers and fruits. It is thus that we knew that we had just entered California, the land of fruit, flowers and sun, the Eldorado of the world. But we did not know what this dreamland was really like until the next morning when we woke up at Santa Barbara, facing the blue waters of the Pacific.

How can one describe in such colorless terms as those of the human tongue that paradise on earth, Santa Barbara? Before this magnificence, this fairyland of nature, the pen remains powerless. Magnificence, fairyland. . . . I should like to array anew these poor words which have been so used and abused that they have lost their value, like coins which have been worn down. I ought to be silent, I say, because I do not possess the words, but it is a need of human nature to wish to make other people share a little of our delight. Imagine a chain of mountains so high that their summits are left in the clouds on the edge of a sea eternally blue. At a certain spot along the coast this chain makes a little curve, forming a nest between its granite arms. That nest is Santa Barbara. Coming down from the moun-

tain you only see at first the foliage of the great eucalyptus trees, the palms, lemon trees and bamboos.

But underneath the palms of this equatorial flora are revealed delightful little châteaux nestling in their own shade, built entirely of wood—bungalows as they are called in the musical language of India. Around these bungalows are flowers, flowers in full bloom, butterflies of every color of the rainbow, and birds of every variety from the pelican to the humming-bird. These humming-birds! Who can describe the grace of those insects which have turned into birds? The Queen one evening was watching one chasing a butterfly which had taken refuge near a flower. To escape from the bird, the butterfly was flying round and round the corolla. And there was such a glistening of feathers, wings and petals that the flower, the bird and the butterfly were all blended together in confusion. It seemed as if the flowers were flying about and the butterflies were bouquets on the branches.

But the magic quality of this place lies in its light. The light is so radiant and so pure that it seems luminous in itself. But though it is dazzling, it is not crude and does not hurt one's

eyes but caresses them like the warm air which bathes one's forehead. In this light the fruits grow ripe, abundant and full of flavor. I picked lemons like that from a tree. I saw vines of heavy grapes swollen with such a rich and delicious juice that one would have thought it to be the elixir of the sun itself.

Colors have a new significance in this light. Our artists should go there to get the shading of the different tones. From gazing at these green lawns they could reproduce a new green; they could get azure and sapphire blue from the transparency of the sky and the wings of the birds; they could find vermilion in the heart of the roses bleeding like an open wound, and could take gold and purple from the magnificence of the sunsets. Oh, these sunsets on the Californian beach! While the last rays fell from the mountain like flows of lava, a sea breeze, laden with the perfume of seaweed and flowers, penetrated under the palms. In the distance, in the soft atmosphere, the drawling melopœia of a singer mingled with the cries of the pelicans.

I went up to Prince Leopold who was leaning against a palm tree contemplating the mountain whose outline was already drowned in darkness.

He looked at me with that melancholy and dream-like look which is characteristic of him, and said:

“It is not three days that I should like to stay here but three months, and then still longer.”

This charming spot is not the only one of its kind. There are others like it all along the coast, crouching low in each bend of the mountains. Santa Barbara is thus repeated a thousand times. All of these oases together constitute the charm and incomparable beauty of the Californian coast.

It is also on the borders of California that the Yosemite National Park is situated in the range of the Sierra Nevada. The Sovereigns and their suite spent two days in this garden whose area is equal to half of that of Belgium. The Yosemite is famous all over America for the richness of its vegetation and the beauty of its scenery.

Trees of every sort grow there, from the sugar pine to flowering trees and tall bushes. But the most extraordinary variety is that of the Sequoia Gigantea, whose average height is three hundred feet. The King placed his hand on one of those trees, the Grizzly Giant, which

has the extraordinary circumference of one hundred feet. Its diameter reaches almost thirty feet; its main branch, two hundred feet above the ground, is seven feet thick, and its height three hundred feet, about three times as high as the Column du Congrès at Brussels.

The hollow trunks of some of these trees form veritable caverns. You can go through them on horseback or in an automobile; you could give a dinner of twenty around a table in one of them. The colossal giants are often no further apart than nine or ten feet; it seems as if they were trying to strangle each other with their great arms. Here, as everywhere else in America, in the forests as well as the cities, was the savage picture of the struggle for existence.

But the remarkable thing is the age of these giants, which date back several thousand years. Contemporaries of Moses, they were old when Rome was young.

The King was presented with some seeds of the *Sequoia Gigantea*. He took them smiling and said:

"I will plant them in my park at Brussels and I will go and see the result some five thousand years from now."

The magnificence of the Yosemite lies also in its rocks. Some of them, 5,000 feet high, rise towering over the valley. In some places cata-racts fall from these heights. One of these is the Bridal Veil Falls, thus named because the water while falling is blown about by the wind so that it resembles a white veil. The rocks, moreover, form one of the most beautiful aspects of picturesque America. They are found everywhere. It would seem that following the changes of the sky below which they lie dreaming and the climate with which they are blessed, they take other forms, express a different poetry and that even their soul changes. My eminent colleague, Mr. Arthur De Rudder, has written some very beautiful lines about the rocks of America which I will quote here :

“The rock. Who can tell us of its tragic beauty? The magnificence of the trees, the charm of rivers, the softness of hills have often been praised. Who can make us understand and love the powerful majesty and wild grandeur of rocks? They live for centuries without moving and we cannot believe that they are insensible because they seem to us to be the very body of the earth, to represent its poetic and lyric quality and its faith which soars up towards the clouds.

“I believe indeed that North America has the most beautiful rocks in the world. They were not wrong

in calling the spinal dorsal which crosses the continent the Rocky Mountains. There are numberless crags scattered on their wooded summits, on the top of their plateaux, in the bottom of their valleys. Many of them have strange and imposing forms; there are some like those of Utah, which rise with a single dart as if they had burst forth straight from the center of the earth; there are others like those of the Grand Canyon, which are arranged in battle formation, heaped together and piled on top of each other like gigantic walls built as if to erect the most fabulous palace that could ever be conceived by poet's imagination. There are some whose ridges are like needles, and still others isolated in the high plains raise their phantom-like peaks in vast and unknown spaces of which we had never dreamed, for with what dreams, legends or poems could our Europe, the creator of gentleness or horror, have showered the spectral rocks of Nebraska? But perhaps imposing imposing of all rise in the Valley of the Yosemite, for example, the Two Sisters, the Cathedral Towers, or that extraordinary Captain who raises his heavy and dominating form more than seven hundred feet above the ground.

"There are some in New Mexico which resemble tall spires and towers; there are some which one would think lost or left there in the great red deserts of Arizona by some giant or absent-minded god. They have tints of emerald, ruby and sapphire. They reflect all the colors of earth and sky, but red predominates, and they still bear traces of that internal fire which gave them birth. Dawn, noon and evening light them up, gild them with the thousand lights of day, while night extinguishes them like great torches."

To return to our excursion in the Yosemite Valley, I will mention a charming little trait of

Queen Elizabeth's character which I noticed in the course of this visit and which again shows the generosity of her nature which has become so well known. Perhaps it is a little trait, but is it not in little things that the character is best revealed?

Not far from the lion's cage, the story of which I have already told, were some fish ponds where young trout were being raised in troughs fed with running water. The Queen was leaning over the edge, amusing herself by looking at the thousands of little fishes swarming there when she suddenly saw one of them caught on a twig by one of its fins. The little animal was struggling in vain to free itself. Seeing this, Prince Leopold took a stick and stuck it in the water. But his mother stopped him.

"Look out," she said, "you will hurt him."

"But then, how do you want me to do it?"

Without answering, the Queen slowly took off her gloves. Then, rolling up her sleeve, plunged her arm into the icy water and loosened the little fish with infinite care.

It is also near this fish pond that I witnessed an amusing scene where Queen Elizabeth tried to take a photograph of a little Indian ten or

twelve years old, a pure offspring of that red-skinned race with long, dark hair and eyes of fire. The child had a superstitious terror of the eye of the strange instrument which was turned on him. What sorcery was lying in wait for him in that box? As he obstinately turned his back on the Queen, she asked one of the ladies of her suite to place herself opposite with another camera to catch the boy between two fires in this manner. But no sooner did the rascal understand the plan than he frustrated it by taking refuge behind a tree trunk. The Queen immediately asked us to surround the tree. This time the Indian did not seem able to escape any longer from the lenses surrounding him, when suddenly with the agility of a squirrel, he jumped at the trunk, climbed up it with his hands, legs and feet, and in less time than it takes to say it, disappeared in the thick foliage.

On horseback along little paths cut in the rock itself on the side of dizzy precipices, our Sovereigns and their suite reached the summit of the glacier mountain, where we were to spend the night. Here we saw one of those wonderful sunsets peculiar to California. Sky and earth were suddenly tinted with blood as if by the wand

of a magician. But the twilight did not last long, and the next moment night had fallen. Five thousand feet below us in the valley at our feet, we saw the houses light up one by one. The stars seemed to shine beneath us as well as above. Then some cowboys came and set fire to a pile of wood on the edge of the rock. When the flames started to hiss they pushed the burning logs over the precipice into the empty void, and the cataract of fire, bounding from rock to rock, sent a flash of yellow light into the depths of the valley.

The inhabitants of California, that legendary country, are strong and healthy, a beautiful race with black eyes and glowing tanned skin. When they are not working they ride in their motors, for many cars in that distant land glide in the shade of the palms. Young women, sometimes very young women, are at the wheel, driving alone or with their friends.

I trust I may be allowed to tell a personal anecdote which, however, throws light on the character of American manners and customs.

One afternoon when I was walking alone in the suburbs of Santa Barbara, one of those motors driven by a young girl all alone, one of the flowers of health and freshness of which Cal-

ifornia boasts, stopped at my side. The charming driver addressed me: "You are all alone, sir. Won't you get in the car and let me drive you home?"

Would others have thought as I did, or was it conceit on my part, but I remember seeing in this gesture only a gracious greeting. After all, the adventure was charming. I took my seat next to the pretty Californian.

What do you suppose that lovely girl talked to me about from the corner of the road where she had picked me up all the way back to my hotel? She talked to me of her biceps! Yes, really, of her biceps, which she had acquired by taking regular exercise. As I could not help smiling, she thought that I did not believe her. I can still see her holding on to the steering wheel with one hand and offering me her arm. "But feel, sir; just feel!"

I found myself face to face with one of those real daughters of America, loving physical exercise above everything else and cultivating it passionately. As she explained to me, she rode horseback every morning from nine to eleven, and then played tennis. After lunch she drove around in her car and then had tea. And many

of her sisters of American aristocracy do the same thing—I mean of middle-western and far-western aristocracy. It is to this out-of-door life that these women, it seems, owe the conservation of their bright coloring and youthful grace at the age of forty or fifty. I saw women of sixty and seventy with white hair whose cheeks still kept their youthful coloring and whose foreheads were not wrinkled. It is true that American women, who have less keen feelings, do not know those moral torments, those crises and those thousand painful shadows which cross the lives of European women and make them grow old. Being less delicate, they suffer less as they also rejoice less.

What also conserves that physical integrity for them in spite of their years is to a large extent the purity of their morals. To the American girl, man is a comrade. No embarrassment, no false modesty restrains her when she is with him. She joins in his games, walks with him, accompanies him to the theater. In order to know each other well, some engaged couples even travel together before they are married. They never have the slightest idea that there could be anything wrong in this intimacy. On the beaches

young men and girls go in bathing together in crowds. When they come out of the water they lie on the sand basking in the sun. They play there for a long while side by side, looking at each other and laughing, laughing especially. The women laugh a great deal for the pleasure of laughing and showing their teeth, which are very beautiful. And those young men never take advantage of such situations. They do not even seem to be tempted. It is a matter of temperament, you may say. Perhaps, but it is also a matter of education. From their earliest infancy, boys and girls have rubbed up against each other on the school benches. For this mixture of the two sexes in the schools is another American peculiarity. The little boy's mother has previously taught him this lesson: "You are going to school. You will meet little girls there. You must protect them because they are weaker than you are."

This precept of the mother to her small son forms the man's ideas throughout the whole of his life. The American man respects woman because he regards himself as her protector. He knows that she is weaker than he, and because of the nobility of his feelings thinks that it would

be odious to try to take advantage of her. It is this feeling of the protection due to the weak which roused these people in our behalf in this war and made them hurl themselves into the torture. It is because of this quality that the American people, whatever else may be said about them, are one of the most civilized races in the world.

Nevertheless, one must not judge American morals by the attitude of some of the troops who caroused around our streets and boulevards after the armistice. I hope that I will not give rise to any objections by saying that in my country we did not see that courtesy and noble respect with which men treat women in America. But, after all, can one judge a people by their behavior abroad, especially during the confusion of a war? Would we admit of being judged in England and France by our refugees alone? The answer lies not in this but in the fact that the American man, accustomed to so much real sincerity in the modesty of women at home, was startled when he went abroad. The alluring manœuvres and all the knowing arts of enticement—which he was in no way armed to meet—

stunned and intoxicated him. Between the boulevards of New York and those of Paris, London or Brussels, there is the same difference that exists between a river with clear water and a malarial marsh. I am not exaggerating. Those who have frequented both boulevards will vouch for it. On the "George Washington," a young officer of the marines who regularly made the journey between New York and Brest, confided to me his preference for the calls at the French port, because there, he added with significant mimicry, the women are more "amusing." That young officer was probably an excellent fellow at home and a scamp abroad. Whose fault is it? That of the women. A long while ago the Prince of Ligne wrote: "In every country the men make the laws and the women make the morals."

The American woman likes to adorn herself and dress luxuriantly. Whatever one may say, she dresses well. The fashion of wearing décolleté is very popular over there. I have often noticed in Europe that the more a woman tries to dress up the more she takes off. This is equally true in America.

Still, if I may be forgiven for going back to it,

the American woman is not coquettish. Paul Bourget, who has studied her behavior, gives these words of a French woman in contrast:

“I have never dressed for a ball without knowing for whom I was going.”

The American woman dresses in order to be beautiful, but beautiful for her own sake, because she is well made and because she thinks that what is well made should be well dressed. Love does not occupy much space in the life of the American woman. She certainly thinks about it less than her European sisters. Her emotions are less fragile. Perhaps one of the causes of this lies in that physical energy which she imposes on herself through exercise. As a young girl she shows no haste in getting married. This condition, moreover, does not seem in the least enviable to her. When married she will lose that constant homage, that discreet and respectful solicitation with which men over there surround a young girl. They will pay less attention to her because in the United States it is commonly considered that a married woman belongs to her husband. Marriage, moreover, means to the young girl the loss of her freedom. Up till then she has lived a life of absolute free-

dom—do not talk to me of family life or parental authority; all that so seldom exists!—when married, she will give herself a master. In order to make up for the sacrifice she has made for him, this master will often think that the least he can do is to work like a slave for her all his life.

CHAPTER V

FROM THE PACIFIC TO THE ATLANTIC

WHEN the three days of rest in the oasis of Santa Barbara were over, the King resumed his journey through the United States and came back towards the Atlantic. Once again he crossed the great expanse of the New World. Up to the arrival of our Sovereigns in California, the speed of their journey had been extraordinary. But from the time we left Santa Barbara to the day we reached Washington, it was a mad race. The halts on this return were marked chiefly by visits to cities. Every morning we arrived in one of these great centers with all the ceremony of an official visit.

At about nine o'clock the King would leave his train. He would be received by delegates, and would then proceed through the city with his suite. He would go to greet the municipality, visit the principal monuments and factories, have the important people presented to him, and

see those who had done things for Belgium during the war and thank them, etc. This strenuous activity lasted all day long, and then at night the King returned to his train and was carried off at break-neck speed to another city, where he spent the next day in his usual round of duties.

I shall not tell of the wild enthusiasm and feverish ovations with which the very generous American people greeted our Sovereign in every one of these cities. These detailed descriptions would be too tiresome and boring. I must, however, mention a few of the novel features which struck me in some of the cities, either in their customs, their picturesque aspect or their industrial situation.

San Francisco

After leaving Santa Barbara, our Sovereigns went to San Francisco. What a contrast to the peaceful spot they had just left was presented by the frantic commotion and tumult of the great Californian port! The immense expansion of that city, which was originally founded by a handful of adventurers in quest of gold mines, is well known. As in New York, though it is

even more marked here, one meets members of every race crowding each other on the sidewalks: Germans almost as numerous as Americans, and Irish, French, Mexicans, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos and Kanakas. I also felt that feverish life, that inconceivable energy of ceaseless work that characterizes New York. Before seeing the end of the royal retinue, the passers-by who had gathered together to greet the King went on with their rush of activities. They are blind to anything outside of their own interests. They are thinking of the things they have to do and of the success of their business. No sooner do they catch sight of a new business idea than they run after it.

“But when do these people live?” some one exclaimed on witnessing this spectacle. “What time have they for dreaming, living, or even dying?”

For the American does not know how to live in the philosophic sense of the word. He does not know how to collect his thoughts, to commune with himself and become stirred by inward contemplation. He is especially ignorant of how to stop in the midst of a sensation, to consider himself as a feeling and living indi-

vidual. He never thinks: "I rejoice now, I am happy." He does not know that refinement which consists in analyzing his happiness, in dissecting it to appreciate it better in all of its phases. He seeks that happiness "en bloc," all at once. But when he has attained it, he does not taste its full flavor because he thinks only of increasing it. And in order to increase it he sets off at full speed, rushing to new sensations, burning away his life, wasting his days, and always repeating that time is money.

Time is indeed money, but is not this value of time better appreciated by those who know how to stop to look at it and see themselves living in it? Having been warned of its brevity, they get the best that they can from it in an epicureanism of good alloy. Wisdom does not belong to the business men who think that time is money; it belongs to the philosophers, thinkers, dreamers, poets and all those who consider time to be life. In the United States people grow old without living.

The King and his suite visited San Francisco by motor and made the tour of its magnificent bay. The splendor and richness of that immense

harbor are famous. The great bare mountains which surround it remind one of the shores of Greece, especially at Athens.

We were interested in seeing the Seal Rocks at a stone's throw from the beach. These rocks, beaten by the waves, are covered with great sea lions which are never driven away. Some of them measure twelve feet and weigh a thousand pounds or more. In spite of the noise of the surf, one can clearly hear the raucous barking of these animals.

While passing through this city I was able to notice a small detail which on the surface does not seem very important, but which nevertheless throws light on one of the most beautiful sides of the American character: honesty.

In San Francisco on the corners of the streets and avenues one sees letter boxes in which, as in Belgium, the passers-by put in their mail. But the peculiar thing about these letter boxes is that on their flat tops are placed letters and packages too bulky to go through the openings. The crowd walks by all this exposed mail, apparently without having the slightest thought of taking any of it. Being curious, I went up to

one of these boxes in order to see more closely of what the pile really consisted, and took hold of one of the parcels. Several people saw what I did, but nobody seemed to be worried about it. Not one had the slightest idea that I might be committing larceny.

This honesty is shown in other ways also. It is found at the doors of some museums and stores where books of different values are exposed. A placard gives the respective prices: \$1.00, \$1.50, \$2.00, etc. The cashier is represented by a tray left there. In my country many would certainly go off with a two-dollar book and only entrust a dollar or less to the blind tray. But it is quite the contrary with Yankee honesty.

I could give many more examples of this, mentioning the news-stand dealers who leave their counters on the street corner, trusting the buyers to fling their change, and those automobiles which are left all night long in the street in front of the door. But what difference does any other evidence make? Does not this confidence which they have in one another reveal the profound integrity of these people, a loyalty of spirit which is in the very blood of the race?

An American to whom I expressed my admiration of the honesty of his people answered me whimsically:

“Sir, the American people never steal on a small scale!”

I have often been struck in America, and especially in San Francisco, by the diversity of the merchandise sold in the department stores and shops. In Belgium each store sells one article exclusively. In the United States this is rarely the case. The type of store which one most frequently sees is that which accumulates in its show-window books, post-cards, soap, almonds, cigars, chewing gum and kodaks. Moreover, the importance of a store seems to depend on the diversity of goods it displays. I visited one of these curious establishments in New York. If some customer had gone in there naked, he could have come out completely clothed, with shoes on, his hair done, and laden with provisions in abundance and theater tickets. I remember that it was possible to buy land and houses there. Cradles and hearses were on sale.

In the large stores, moreover, you can have your shoes shined. The negro bootblack is there watching the customer and ready to precipitate

himself at his feet at the slightest motion. This same negro lies in wait for you at all the street corners, in all the barber shops, at all soda fountains and other public places. This is because they do not clean shoes in the American hotels. I am only mentioning this detail, which might otherwise seem childish, because it is one of the first indications of the lack of real comfort in the United States. Indeed, this American comfort which has been so praised is much more apparent than real. It lacks two elements without which it seems it cannot exist: refinement of manners and customs and domestic service. I have already spoken of the customs. As for service, it is more rare in the United States than in any other country. Is not that intention of every workman to become independent and every servant to become his own master a result of carrying democracy to an excess? One of the attachés of the embassy at Washington who lived in an apartment confided to me that he had to go to a tailor to have a button sewed on his trousers. In Belgium we complain of the lack of servants. The crisis in the United States is much more serious. Servants have such unreasonable demands that many people find it more advanta-

geous to live permanently in a hotel. It is this scarcity of labor that causes those mechanical devices to be multiplied everywhere in which the ignorant foreigner sees the mark of supreme comfort.

In the conglomeration of articles which are piled up in the shop windows one notices books especially, as I have said before. Books are found everywhere in America. As they are shown behind glass in the stores, so they are spread out on the news-stands of the streets and parks. Many individuals have their own libraries at home. Still the American reads little. He has not time. But he likes to surround himself with books because a book is an idea and he reverences ideas. Although he is not an ideologist, he is a fanatic on the subject of ideas. A young people, they have not that exquisite intellectualism which runs through our Latin races. But they are anxious to acquire it and strive to reach it. This effort is assuredly praiseworthy.

Most of the books sold in public booths are novels. Not that literature of the gutter which floods our boulevards, but honest rosewater and barleysugar prose. One could transport the

whole stock of a dealer in second-hand books into the library of a girls' boarding-school with perfect safety. There are many detective stories and tales of amusing exploits among these novels.

One may well be astonished at the great number of historical studies published by American authors. They have no real history any more than they have a real intellectualism, because all their political life dates only from the Revolution at the end of the 18th century. Nevertheless, they aspire to the latter with the same ardor that they desire the former. They want to discover a history for themselves at all hazards. Let us hope, for the sake of their happiness and prosperity, that they will never have one.

As the Americans have no history, so they have no traditions. It is true that this deprives them of that poetry and nobility which make the old races so respectable, but it gives them, on the other hand, a great facility for progress. No habit or sacred custom hinders their improvement. Make way for the young! Nowhere else as in America is this formula in order. Away with obsolete systems! No more autocracy of the past generation! It is the spirit of initiative,

energy and decision which governs them. Doubtless these customs cannot help overtaking us in Europe though we have in our hearts a veneration for our ancestors and a love of old rites. But this does not prevent a little Americanism from being of use to us. What advantages would we not gain from freeing ourselves from some of our old customs! Was it not against this tyranny of conventions that Chamfort rebelled when he cried out:

“The most absurd habits and most ridiculous etiquette exist in France and elsewhere under the protection of this one word: custom. It is precisely the same word that the Hottentots give as an answer when they are asked why they eat the vermin with which they are covered.”

The King and Prince Leopold did not want to leave San Francisco without visiting the Chinese quarter. Chinatown is very picturesque with its curved roofs and the luxury of the silk tunics and pantaloons of those yellow-faced and flat-nosed people who look at you defiantly with their almond-shaped eyes as they go by, with that painful expression which comes from wearing narrow slippers which pinch their toes.

The King was followed by several detectives during this visit, because it is well known that these Chinese quarters are of such ill repute that a stranger cannot venture there alone without exposing himself to danger. Our Sovereign and his son listened to the bizarre and discordant tunes which individuals with faces like sorcerers extracted from strange instruments. They penetrated one of those famous Joss Houses, temples where little packages scented with incense are given out and where Orientals come to ask their god for a remedy which will cure them.

They nevertheless did not visit any opium den because the heavy tax which the American government has put on this product has reduced its consumption. The King visited a Chinese theater but was unable to attend a performance since he only had one day to spend in San Francisco and a Chinese play often lasts several days, sometimes several weeks.

Los Angeles

From San Francisco our Sovereigns went down the Pacific coast and reached Los Angeles, rightly called the Nice of America. This charming

city of sun and light, covered with flowers, lies softly on the slope of a mountain bathing its feet in the waves of a blue ocean. But the visit of our Sovereigns was brief. They hardly devoted more than a couple of hours to Los Angeles, but were carried away in their motors amid the cheers of a zealous and generous people to the "Cinema Kingdom" situated near by.

This "Cinema Kingdom" on the outskirts of Los Angeles belongs to a stupendously rich American company and is surely one of the curiosities of the world. Imagine a huge park protected by a belt of metal trellis. The traveler who had not been warned and who crossed the barrier of the enclosure would think that he was walking in a dream. Here on the right were mosques with their minarets, and the white, irregular walls of an Oriental city; on the left, on the top of a hill, lay an ancient mediæval castle with its towers like sentry-boxes, its walls, its drawbridges, its battlements, its forts, its outworks; in front windmills were turning and the neat houses of a Dutch village lay dreaming in the sun. Thus at every step another corner of the earth rose before our eyes or a lost age came to life again. In the midst of all this

scenery men and women in costume were acting scenes which moving-picture machines recorded.

Here was a modern drawing-room where a handsome young man was making love to a pretty girl, when a rival suddenly rushed in and carried on a scene of violent jealousy with the young couple. And here was the engine room of a submarine in which officers and sailors, asphyxiated through lack of air, were dying a horrible death.

All this scenery is of wood and painted cardboard. One can imagine the enormous cost of this gigantic establishment which extends over more than two hundred acres. But they assured us that its profit was considerable. The radiant light of California is particularly favorable for this kind of enterprise.

One knows the vogue which His Majesty the Cinema enjoys with us. It is nevertheless entirely out of proportion compared with that in the United States. It is a popular passion over there. In the large towns there is hardly a street which does not own a moving-picture theater. Some movie stars have a fame which far surpasses that of our best artists. Who has not heard of the famous Charlie, celebrated for his

farces and buffooneries, and whose reputation has spread as far as the old world? Different companies fight with gold for the services of one of these movie stars. One of our newspapers recently announced that this idol had just signed a contract guaranteeing him a million dollars for turning out eight pictures. A million dollars! That is to say, according to exchange before the war, a little more than five million francs, and today actually thirteen or fourteen million! A mere trifle!

The same newspaper said that a certain "Fatty" had signed a contract for three years bringing him in three millions. The actor agreed to play eight two-act films a year. Here is a gentleman who in the space of three years will earn a fortune of thirty million francs in our currency. It is bewildering, to say the least.

In finishing this sketch of the movie fever in the United States, I must add that in Los Angeles the children in the schools make their films themselves. They reproduce their sports and their associations and write scenarios. They give weekly performances with their own machines in the assembly hall of the school where their parents, filled with pride and emotion, come to

admire the talent of their offspring. In order to combine the useful with the agreeable, educational films are also shown.

The Grand Canyon. The Red-Skins

And now our Sovereigns, having at last left the wonders of California, started east again. Crossing Arizona, they stopped for a few hours at the Grand Canyon, which is undoubtedly one of the most extraordinary curiosities of the picturesque world. In spite of the fact that by its depth and the steepness of its perpendicular slopes this valley reminded us of the Yosemite, it cannot be compared with it. Its red cliffs on which no vegetation grows and its rocky depths through which runs a muddy stream give it an entirely different aspect. It is like an immense caldron of brick-colored copper, fourteen miles in width. It is an extraordinary phenomenon, this enormous hole which is not the result of eruption and upheaval, but of a slow depression of the earth worn away by subterranean streams.

Three Indian tribes live on the edges of the Grand Canyon. They organized dances in honor of the King. A great yellow monster whose face

was streaked with many colors and whose body was covered with feathers, gesticulated for several minutes, uttering guttural cries and waving a spear and shield over his head.

The most interesting dance, however, was without doubt the "Dance of Tears." A handful of men just like the first in their grotesque make-up ran around in a circle single file, singing a vague sort of dirge. After a quarter of an hour this race became frenzied and painful. The dancers were completely out of breath. Nevertheless, they went on stamping and wailing. Then their chant began to resemble groans, cries and sobs as a result of their exhaustion. It was the "Dance of Tears" in all its glory.

After it was over the King summoned the chief of the dance to him and pinned a medal on his breast which was beating like a bird's wing. Sekakuku—that was his name—opened his mouth (it is true that he was so out of breath that he could hardly close it) at the sight of this beautiful red ribbon and this medal which was shining so brightly. Then he went off to carry his new fetich to the men of his tribe who congratulated him, lifting up their arms to the sky.

How proud he was, that chief of the dance!

The King's Mail

In the United States the railroad is not protected from the public by hedges and fences as it is in Europe. It passes through small towns and villages in the open. The train slows up in these places and warns the passers-by by means of a great bell on the engine. Every time the train stopped the crowd would surround the King's car and gaze at it. When our Sovereign showed himself on the observation platform with the Queen, he was greeted by shouts and cheers. The men would put out their hands in order to reach that of the gallant King, while the women lifted their children up towards the Queen hoping that she might be gracious enough to pet them, and our Sovereigns never failed to respond.

At each one of these stops numerous letters were delivered on board the train. Most of them came from people living in the country and were addressed to the King and Queen. Some of these offered them money, others asked for it. One of them was a request from a man who was in prison in New Hampshire for killing his wife. He begged for his release for a few weeks so that he could go to see his old mother who lived in Bel-

gium. The King communicated this request to the consul at Washington.

But generally these letters contained welcoming messages. Some were charming in their naïveté. I must quote one which I have here right in front of me, written in pencil in a child's handwriting and signed "Edith." Edith probably thought that Her Majesty was called "Queen" as well as "Elizabeth," because this is the way she began:

"Dear Madam Queen:

"I am a little American girl. I go to a school on a mountain covered with pines. I heard that you were going to Washington. I hope that you will also come to see me in my school. I know a great many things and I will tell them to you. I helped to make clothes for the Belgian children during the war. I prayed for you a lot. My sister prayed too. I have never been to Washington. I am ten years old. My sister is eight. Good-bye!"

The journey was lightened with charming episodes of this sort, while our Sovereigns crossed

New Mexico and Kansas and reached St. Louis, the great city of Missouri.

St. Louis

The generous sympathy given to our country during the war by the beautiful city of Missouri is well known. Its aldermen made a special decision that for six weeks all the factories of the city (and one must see the factories of St. Louis in order to get an idea of their colossal output) should be operated solely in the manufacture of clothing for the Belgian people. St. Louis was able to tell our Sovereign with pride that of all the cities of the United States it had sent the largest amount of clothing to Belgium.

St. Louis, the rival of Chicago in the meat packing industry, was founded, like many other cities in the United States, by a handful of French immigrants. The names of many streets and families still recall that fact to-day.

The King gazed with admiration at the gigantic bridge thrown across the Mississippi. This extraordinary bridge is about 6,000 feet long. It was built in 1869 at a cost of \$20,000,000 and con-

indomitable courage in the face of the enemy, firmness and far-sightedness—these are the qualities which were incarnated in your illustrious President.”

Then the King repeated those words of Lincoln after the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863 which decided the war of Secession :

“‘It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.’ I who have come to-day from a far country will never forget those words of your President. I can find in his example the power and firmness which make a leader worthy of his nation and cause him to devote himself to the task of progress and idealism which great Lincoln so nobly began.”

Cincinnati

Our visit to Cincinnati was among the most interesting of the journey. As we were told, the name Cincinnati was given to the great Ohio city because it was founded at the time of the War of Independence by a group of young men who, like the Roman Cincinnatus, had left the

plow to fight for the freedom of their country.

The King made a special visit to the great chemical factory built during the war by Messrs. Ault and Wiborg. The main idea of our Sovereign in inspecting these establishments was to pay a debt of gratitude to its directors who showed great generosity towards our country. It was with a patriotic aim that Ault and Wiborg started their factory.

"The Germans have always from the very beginning had the monopoly of the manufacture of chemical products here," they explained to the King. "This gave them great power. Moreover, we wanted to take this power away from them. And we can say that after the efforts of two years we succeeded, for here is a factory which to-day rivals theirs."

The directors pointed with legitimate pride to their establishment, which extends over a large area in the very heart of Cincinnati. The King went through some of the buildings which were filled with strong chemical odors. He leaned over gigantic vats at the bottom of which bitter liquids were boiling whose fumes made one's eyes fill with tears. He noticed the "dyeing presses," from which flowed rivers of colored ink.

It may perhaps be of interest to know that the annual production of the Ault and Wiborg factory is six million pounds of cloth and paper dyes, and eight million pounds of printers' ink.

At the very end, the visit to the family mansion of former President Taft, with its wonderful collection of pictures and works of art, was full of interest and charm. This time the atmosphere of the place was not ruined, as it was in the house of Lincoln, by the anachronism of a victrola playing our national anthem and by modern colored prints.

Going through the halls and rooms of this luxurious house, our Sovereigns were able to admire the works of masters of all the European schools. Arranged with exquisite taste were paintings by Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Jean Steen, Marys, Terburg, Frans Hals, Corot, Dupré, Daubigny, and also by representatives of the English school—Gainsborough, Turner, Constable and Lawrence.

We were struck by the kindness and sustained attention with which the King studied these pictures. Again and again he expressed his admiration. Our Sovereign, as is well known, takes

the greatest interest in the progress of the arts. During this journey in the United States he gave frequent proofs of it. Thus while visiting the Carnegie Institute at Pittsburg a few days later, he asked for many details about its contents. This institute was founded by the steel king with a view to encouraging the arts and sciences. Built in 1892 in the style of the Italian Renaissance, it cost its generous Mæcenas more than a million dollars.

I must mention in this connection that one frequently comes across museums, libraries and universities founded by the bequests of great millionaires in the United States. These donors act according to the idea that since they have accumulated a great fortune from society, they owe something to it in return. Hence, it is their love of art and intellectualism that determines the form of their gift. We must also beware of making fun of the Americans in the realm of art and ideas, for they have a sentiment which, though less erudite, is perhaps more beautiful and generous than ours. Aside from the rarest exceptions, where are our Mæcenases who patronize art, science and literature? Where

are the Harvards and Carnegies who found, or only vie with each other in founding, universities and museums?

But since I am speaking of American art, I may be allowed to insert a little parenthesis here. Is there a real American art? No, answers ancient Europe mercilessly. It is a fact that during our trip through America we did not see anywhere a monument that showed a really national art. Moreover, these people—and this is a curious observation—do not give the impression of being artistic because they are too strong, too vigorous, too healthy, and also because their dollars ring too clearly and shine too frankly. Is there not need for more refinement, more delicacy, more tenuity, so to speak, to acquire that subtilty of taste which creates true art?

Paul Bourget, who has studied the Americans in this respect, has made fun of them: "The only art they have is what they have taken from us." And again, speaking of one of their picture galleries where he noticed the portrait of Napoleon, he cites with double malice this saying of one who did not love them: "Yes, they have the portrait of the great Emperor, but where is that of their grandfather?"

It is nevertheless true that if the Americans up till now have not had a real creative ability, neither have they had one which is antagonistic to art. Nowhere during his journey in the decoration of public buildings or private residences did the King meet with a single mistake in taste, or an injury to the æsthetic sense which one sees at every step in stolid Germany. And, what is even better, these people carry good taste into the architecture of their houses and into their interiors, creating a very simple style which is not overloaded, and which has no studied refinement except that of line. Would our architects succeed in building sky-scrapers in the middle of a city which would not be elephantine? But in America they erect buildings of forty or fifty stories which, far from being heavy, are slender and graceful.

Even if the Americans have not yet an art, they have good taste and æsthetic sense which seem to me to be its precursors. During his visit to Cincinnati, the King confided to the violinist Ysaye: "I believe that in about fifty years America will be the first country in the world in the realm of art and literature as well as in that of economics." Perhaps our Sovereign was a little

optimistic in giving America such a short period of delay. The country seems too young to have the maturity which is indispensable to an artistic people. But I believe that there will come a day when, following the call of genius, American art, latent to-day, will suddenly blossom forth and develop with that formidable energy and feverish progress characteristic of the American spirit. Who knows but that the old world in a century or two, after the groping of pioneers, may not see rising out of America one of those sparkling pleiades who flourished in Attica as Scopas, Phydias and Praxiteles; in the Renaissance as Giotto, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Correggio and Michael Angelo, and in the Netherlands as Reubens, Van Dyck and Rembrandt?

On the occasion of our visit to Cincinnati, a center where the German element is very large, some of us thought we noticed a certain coldness in the greeting of the inhabitants. It is only fair to say, however, that we were so accustomed to whistles and uproar that when they did not break our eardrums we thought that our reception was lacking in warmth. Nevertheless, it is

true that the foreign element—Russian, Polish, Scandinavian, Italian and Irish, as well as German—forms a large part of the population of the United States. In order to enjoy the same privileges as native-born Americans, these immigrants have asked for and obtained naturalization; but most of them keep in their hearts a dangerous loyalty for their old country—dangerous to the Union which on the occasion of a contradiction or conflict with one of these foreign countries might find serious divergencies rising within it.

As I am writing these lines the New York "Herald" announces that the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate will shortly place before the government a peace resolution marking the refusal of the United States to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, and renouncing at the same time all further participation in the settlement of European questions. Is the spirit of this resolution not inspired, among other motives, by the necessity of pacifying certain elements of the population and by a desire not to arouse new internal susceptibilities in the future? It has been asserted that America was called to play the rôle of arbitrator in the world.

For the reason that I have just mentioned, I do not believe that she will ever be capable of playing that rôle.

Talking of the diversity of races in the United States, here are some statistics which the "Mercur of France" recently took from the federal census of 1910 in order to comment on them. At that time there were seven states (and let us not forget that there are forty-eight in all) where the proportion of foreign-born citizens with reference to the total population was from 25 to 30%; fifteen states where it was from 15 to 25%; and six states where it was from 10 to 15%. If one counts citizens born in the United States of foreign or mixed parentage, one gets the following figures: in thirteen states more than 50% of the inhabitants belong to the two classes mentioned above, and in eleven states there are from 35 to 50%. In 1910 there were more than thirteen million foreign-born in the United States, 18% of whom were Germans, 12% Russians, 12% Austrians and Hungarians (including Poles, Czechs and Slavs), 10% Irish and 9% British subjects. In 1910 among fifty cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants there were ten where the foreign-born citizens consti-

tuted more than a third of the total population: from 33% in Detroit and 35% in Chicago up to 40% in New York and 42% in Lowell; and in only fourteen of these fifty cities was half of the white native population native-born.

By the help of these figures one sees the problem in its formidable simplicity. If the immigrants on arrival were immediately absorbed into the native population, their assimilation would be relatively swift. This is true among those who come in small crowds or who, when they arrive, do not find their compatriots firmly fixed in groups. But the German, Italian, Scandinavian, Russian, Czech and Polish immigrants have established real foreign colonies in the large cities at least, where they have their quarters, their leaders and their newspapers. These people live among themselves as is very natural, and if they become naturalized, instead of becoming just plain American citizens, they become German-Americans, Italian-Americans, Czecho-Americans, etc. It is a double nationality, a hyphenated nationality, as they call it colloquially over there. Here is the danger, and it can weigh heavily on the internal and foreign policy of the Union. Indeed, it already weighs heavily on

municipal elections in the great centers where each party tries to curry favor with the different nationalities by putting up candidates of every race. If this phenomenon is carried into the realm of national politics, it will be a source of great peril to the Union. This danger, moreover, has seemed imminent ever since the United States took part in the European war. Before April, 1917, the German-Americans in general did not hide their very natural sympathy for Germany; since then they remained quiet, but of what are they thinking? More recently, in May, 1919, the sensational declaration of President Wilson on the Adriatic question excited the Italians in America in favor of Italy's claims, in opposition to those of their adopted country. As for the Irish naturalized Americans, they are only American in so far as it can benefit Ireland. As early as 1880, J. R. Lowell, American Ambassador to London, complained bitterly of those who, coming back to their native town, carried on anti-British agitation under the cover of their new allegiance; it embarrassed and interfered with the actions of the ambassador. Indeed, these people were only Americans to the extent that

the United States could give weight to their claims.

Philadelphia

I will stop for a fleeting moment in this city, the third largest in the United States, to recall that gigantic naval yard built on the Delaware River which our Sovereigns and their suite visited one beautiful autumn afternoon. In gigantic wooden frames which were arranged along the river-front for about a mile and a half, ships were being built. There were fifty boats in the process of construction at the same time. Every twenty-eight hours one of them was launched. The King was able to witness the launching of a boat at that very moment. The workmen who had built it were standing on its decks while the cables which kept it in its wooden cradle were cut. There was suddenly a great cracking, greeted by a formidable "three cheers" from all the spectators. And while the strains of the national anthem resounded in the air, the ship glided on its oiled ways, dipped its bow into the ocean, making a great mass of foam spurt out

from its sides, and finally floated, a proud ruler of the ocean.

In order to take the 30,000 workmen who were employed in this shipyard back to the city, a station was built from which trains black with men left every minute.

CHAPTER VI

WASHINGTON

IN America a city is built in the same time that a monument is erected in Europe," I exclaimed, in speaking of that prodigious city of Chicago, which, though only an encampment of a few adventurers in 1831, to-day numbers almost four million souls.

Washington is less prodigious, but nevertheless in the face of that rich capital of the United States, that city of avenues and squares so majestic in their outline, it is hard to think that a century ago it consisted only of a few farms and pastures on the bank of a river, the Potomac.

The Americans call Washington the most beautiful city in the United States. To tell the truth, the stranger who goes there thus informed cannot help being rather disillusioned. There is a melancholy and almost sad air about those wide avenues drowned in trees and those houses built uniformly of red brick. This city is, more-

over, so spread out, its arteries are so large, its houses so far apart from each other, and its parks so numerous, that it gives the appearance of being sparsely populated. The traveler who comes from imposing and vibrating New York thinks that he will find the capital of the United States the center of strenuous life and of American activity, but only finds a life which in contrast seems hopelessly calm and bourgeois.

The suburbs are more beautiful than the heart of the city. Rich villas, palaces of white marble are situated there. The green lawns and dark box hedges which surround them give that whiteness a brilliant radiancy. The White House, the residence of President Wilson, is built in this style. As I have already said, the President was unable to receive our Sovereign officially, but the King nevertheless went to his host's bedside and had a long talk with him.

Although a little heavy in its massive form, the Capitol at Washington, because of its imposing proportions and the unheard-of luxury of its interior arrangements, is the most remarkable building in Washington—the best in the world, some Americans assert, with their innocent mania for breaking records. Yes, doubtless

the most beautiful in America, but in the world? . . . Uncle Sam is too fond of forgetting old Europe when he makes his records. I believe that some of the European capitols, like that wonder of Ionic architecture at Toulouse, eclipse every American capitol without doubt. Still, the building at Washington, with its cupola suspended at a height of three hundred feet, its monumental staircase and its two wings of white marble which are 142 feet in length, has an imposing beauty.

It is in this huge structure that the representatives of the American people come together to discuss the *res publica*. It was in this palace, in the name of this people, that homage so brilliant and so solemn was rendered to our King and to Belgium that it was really the crowning and apotheosis of our trip.

From among a thousand beautiful words I wish to quote a few which were spoken by Senator Cummins before the entire assembly :

“What would have happened if Germany, after having crushed Europe and driven Asia into submission, had turned her lust towards America? I do not know. Nobody knows. But we do know that a country small in its territory and in the

number of soldiers but peerless in its loyalty to Christian principles and human liberty raised itself up before the footsteps of this monster and in a transport of supreme sacrifice saved the freedom of the world. If the sons and daughters of our race ever forget that sacrifice or remember it otherwise than with gratitude and respect, the world which Belgium saved will be unworthy of its deliverance."

It is evident in the eyes of generous America that it is not we who owe her gratitude, but she who remains our debtor. Our debtor! She who in our hour of distress sent us provisions across the ocean to keep us alive, sent us clothing to put on our backs, and her sons to save us! We can never measure the debt of gratitude we owe the noble country of Washington.

During his visit in the capital of the United States, the King made a point of going to Mount Vernon, where the remains of General George Washington are buried. Mount Vernon is about fourteen miles from the city on the banks of the Potomac in the state of Virginia.

It was on a soft late afternoon of October in Washington that our Sovereign embarked on the "Mayflower," the yacht of President Wilson

which had been placed at the disposal of his guest. The yacht sailed for a long while between banks covered with wild forests whose foliage autumn had colored with bright tints of purple and gold. From time to time on the very edge of the river, the white gable of a mansion was reflected in the water. These are the places where the aristocracy of Washington come to spend their hours of leisure during the season. The air was soft and warm. Not a ripple stirred the water which was as smooth as a mirror. The yacht glided along as if in a dream. Gulls with great wings were flying in circles around the prow. From time to time a flock of wild ducks formed a triangle against the sky. An unseen orchestra which played secretly added charm to the hour.

But suddenly an unexpected blare of a bugle called the crew on deck. At the top of a hill we caught sight of a white colonial mansion which seemed asleep behind its closed shutters. There it was! The boat stopped in the middle of the river. While the officers and sailors stood at attention, and the King, his hand on his military cap, saluted with deep emotion, the bugles sent the strains of the "Hymn of Sleep"—a

melody as slow as a dirge and sad as a sob—rolling off towards the steep banks.

Several small boats came up to the "May-flower." The King and his suite disembarked and approached the hill, which was shaded by willows leaning over the water like curtains with long fringe. I believe I have said that America lacks refinement of feeling, that she ignores that poetry of the soul which belongs to Latin peoples. That night, nevertheless, in the face of certain manifestations of American reverence, this conviction was strangely shattered. Is it not a sense of great tact and delicacy which forbids visitors at Mount Vernon to smoke in the park which was formerly inhabited by the great and mourned president?

The King and Queen walked in front as we started up the avenue which goes up the hill and leads to the tomb of Washington. As we went along the officers reminded me in a low tone of voice of certain episodes in the life of the "Liberator of America." How glorious was that hero who earned the gratitude and love of his people forever! In 1753, at the age of twenty-one, he went to notify the French who were established on the Ohio River to retire. As they refused,

he compelled them to leave by force of arms. A few years later, when misunderstandings had arisen between England and her American colonies, Washington spoke with energy against the English claims. He even preached complete independence for all the territory of the American colonies. Having been proclaimed commander-in-chief of the American army, in spite of the numerical inferiority of his troops and lack of provisions, he succeeded in driving the English out of Boston, their main stronghold. But the English, advancing towards the center, got hold of Philadelphia. Washington rushed to the rescue and this time defeated the entire army of the enemy. Two years later (1783) the Peace of Versailles forced England to recognize the independence of the United States. As in ancient days the Roman Cincinnatus retired to his fields after freeing his fatherland, Washington then returned to Mount Vernon, where he again took up his life of a country gentleman. He left it once more, however, when the United States became a republic, and accepted its presidency in 1789. He was reëlected in 1793, and on the expiration of this term refused the power which was offered to him for the third time. Having definitely re-

tired to Mount Vernon, he took pleasure in the gentle and peaceful joys of family life, and died in 1799. The whole of America mourned his loss and wore mourning for its liberator for a month.

The King and Queen had now reached the tomb of Washington. It is a very simple monument, built according to the plan of him whose ashes it contains, a memorial of red stones mingled with the leaves of the willows. Above the gate which guards the crypt is this inscription: "Within this Enclosure Rest the Remains of General George Washington." In the crypt are two sarcophagi of white marble. The one on the right is that of the president, the other that of his wife, Martha.

The majesty of the spot was not broken by a single word. August silence reigned there, which it would have been irreverent to break. Everybody felt it, hence there were only signs. The King having turned back towards his suite, took from the hands of an officer a great wreath of chrysanthemums and ribbons of the Belgian colors on which could be read: "Albert and Elizabeth, King and Queen of Belgium." He penetrated into the crypt and, bowing his head

reverently, placed the wreath on the tomb of Washington. It was an impressive sight, that of this King, the most beautiful and noble figure of modern times, bowing before the memory of the first president of the United States.

The Queen and Prince entered the crypt in turn and bowed reverently as the King had done. Three wreaths were already there. The first had been brought by Baron Moncheur, head of the Belgian mission in 1917, the second by an English mission that same year, and the third by General Joffre.

After a short visit to the house of Washington, where all the furniture and belongings which he used during his life-time are preserved, our Sovereigns went down the hill and reëmbarked in the "Mayflower," which brought them back in the night.

Conclusion

In conclusion I should like to make a short commentary on these words spoken by an American about the extraordinary sympathy which was shown everywhere on the King's journey.

"The King of the Belgians," this man exclaimed, "is busy conquering America."

How true were those words! Before the King's visit America loved the Belgian people, but she loved them as an idea because she worshiped the ideal of justice and it was displeasing to her to see the strong crush the weak. Now, in the footsteps of him who incarnated all the strength and courage of that little people, this love took form, became concrete, and was realized in the wonderful traits of the renowned visitor. In the eyes of America, Belgium at this minute means Albert I.

Another side of this affection which arose out of pity before the royal visit—for it was with this feeling particularly that America gave us alms—is that by favor of the King's journey, in the face of his dignity and moral greatness, this pity was turned into deep esteem and veneration. No, Belgium is not a beggar who arouses pity by uncovering her wounds; and in the future America will continue to help her not as a poor cousin but as a very noble little sister.

It has frequently been asked what would be the effect on Belgium of her King's journey to the United States. It would seem that these results should be sought rather in the realm of morals than in that of means. Our Sovereign did not

go over there to transact business and make contracts, but rather to increase the sympathy of the Americans towards his people. It is in this sympathy that material benefit will be derived to Belgian business men and manufacturers in knowing that it can be used in making advantageous and definite commercial relations. America is very well disposed to help Belgium in her economic reconstruction. But let us beware of degrading ourselves. Her intervention in the future will not be gratuitous; the moral factors which moved her in the past to come to our rescue through pity no longer exist. She knows that Belgium has gained a new vitality and is already rising again. Statements with respect to this were made by the Belgian delegation which at the time of the King's journey was sitting at Salt Lake City under the chairmanship of M. Hankar. These statements made a very good impression. And it is precisely because America is assisting our courageous efforts that, when she has become confident, she will be willing to trade with us. May we profit by these very favorable sentiments so that the economic progress of our nation will be greatly advanced.

But if ever some call for help—God preserve

us from such a fate—should be given by our King or one of his descendants to the great people on the other side of the Atlantic, there is no doubt that the call will be heard and that in a new wave of generosity powerful America will save Belgium a second time.

CHAPTER VII

COMING HOME FROM AMERICA: THE ISLES OF THE BLEST

BEFORE closing I must say a word about the charming visit which the King and his suite made at the port of Ponta del Gada on the island of San Miguel (Azores), while recrossing the Atlantic.

When our Sovereigns left Norfolk, Virginia, with Europe as their destination, they had no plan for visiting the Azores. It was only on the third day of the crossing that the Queen, on consulting the map, noticed that the boat which was following a northeast course could bear more directly east without a very great detour and, after stopping at the Azores, could go north again. Our Queen's desire was law to the gallant captain, who immediately directed his ship towards the Portuguese islands.

Fayenne, the first of these, appeared on the morning of the sixth day. It rose out of the ocean raising its icy peaks six thousand feet

above the waves. The snow which covers the tops of these mountains enables one to appreciate their gigantic altitude more clearly if one realizes that the Azores, being in the same latitude as Lisbon, have an extremely hot climate. An atmosphere like that of California reigns in these islands. The sun maintains a perpetual summer.

All the passengers of the "George Washington" ran up on deck to admire this gorgeous scene. Above the clouds clinging to the sides of the mountains was the dazzling brightness of perpetual snow—below, the verdure of equatorial vegetation. All day long the boat sailed in and out of these islands, hugging the shores of forests filled with lemon-trees, orange-trees, date-trees, and palms. It was only on the morning of the next day that we arrived at San Miguel. As the "George Washington" drew too much water to come any nearer to the land, smaller boats were lowered to take the King and his suite ashore.

What a contrast and what a charming surprise for the eyes of travelers coming from America was created by this Portuguese island, lost in the Atlantic! What an enchantment to minds weary of straight lines and uniformity was pre-

sented by those little winding streets, those uneven pavements, and those houses painted in lurid reds and blues! Some were covered with red roofs put on crookedly like bonnets. Leaning on windowsills half shaded by blinds were women gazing as if in a dream. Their skin was bronze and their hair jet black. Others passed through the streets clad in scarlet. Their hands on their hips, they carried baskets of fruit on their heads. Men, too, with soft felt hats, bright ties and dark red shirts, and now and then students who were recognized by their long waving locks and black capes which they draped about them like togas. All these men had their hands in their pockets and cigarettes in their mouths. They were idling about. One sees a great deal of idling in tropical countries. Also how many beggars were holding out their hands on all the corners and porches! Now and then a peddler passed by, leading his donkey. Baskets were fastened to each side of the pack-saddle in which piles of bananas, pineapples, and lemons gave the appearance of rays of sunlight. A language warm as the sun and variegated as their costumes is spoken by these people. An odor of moldy ale and wine was floating in the air.

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Yes, wine! American laws have no jurisdiction here. They drink wine at San Miguel. And what wine! Virgin sanchissima! You can tell that from their dazzling color and flaming eyes. Wine and sun, do they not make life worth living?

The King had landed secretly in the midst of this population, hoping to visit the city and the neighboring country incognito and then slip noiselessly away. But the people of San Miguel would not hear of it. They immediately recognized their guest. What joy and bursts of enthusiasm went through the city! "Por Dios y todos sus santos." By God and all the saints, the King of the Belgians was in San Miguel!

In less than two hours notices were put on all the walls and distributed from hand to hand reading: "A Camara Municipal d'esta cidade convida o Publico em geral a associarem-se a una manifestacao que se realisará hoje, entre as 2 e meia e 3 horas da tarde, nos Caes, a S. S. Magestades os Reis de Belgica." (The Municipal Council of the city invites the general public to take part in a celebration which will take place this afternoon between half-past two and three on the

wharves in honor of their Majesties, the King and Queen of Belgium). Certain notices added: "Ornamentar com bandeiras os edificios dos seus estabelecimentos." (We think it proper that the tradespeople should adorn their shops with flags.) How superfluous was this last recommendation! You should have seen the shutters closing, the blinds being drawn and the flags being put out! In a few moments the city was decked with ribbons as if by a magician's wand. Those who did not have flags adorned their houses just the same. How? With rags, colored rags of any shade whatsoever, provided they were vivid and dazzling. How the beautiful women adorned themselves for the "great celebration," their gala dresses covered with lace and sparkling jewels. I do not know if they were really jewels, but under the tropical sun all stones are gems as all rags are flags.

At the proper hour everybody was ready. On the wharf from which the King was to embark a great crowd was swarming. They were all shaking hands and congratulating each other. "Maes de Deos!" They were going to see the King of the Belgians!

A hundred times their overexcited imaginations thought that he was in sight. Then they greeted him frantically. Then they saw that it was a delusion, and began to wait again.

Finally, an automobile suddenly blew its horn in the distance, and the motor in which the tall figure of the King was recognized glided up to the middle of the wharf. They cried out, they shouted their greetings to him. A volley of shots rent the air; the sirens of all the boats in the harbor blew. For a long while the deafening noise lasted, the "fen du brut" of Escourbanies in all its glory.

The charming part of it was that those who could not see the King, either because they were drowned in the crowd or because they found themselves pushed back of the barrier made by the others, were most moved. I caught sight of a fruit-peddler perched on the top of his baskets. I do not know if he could see the King or not. But suddenly as his eyes remained fixed on the group where the King was, he made a deep bow, and stretching out his arm, shook an invisible hand in the void, made a speech, bowed again, and went on speaking. At this very minute he

is probably telling his family of the handshakes given him by the King of Belgium, and the noble words he said to him, and is shedding tears of joy over this glorious and beautiful recollection.

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